

A VICTIM OF CONSCIENCE  
by  
Milton Goldsmith



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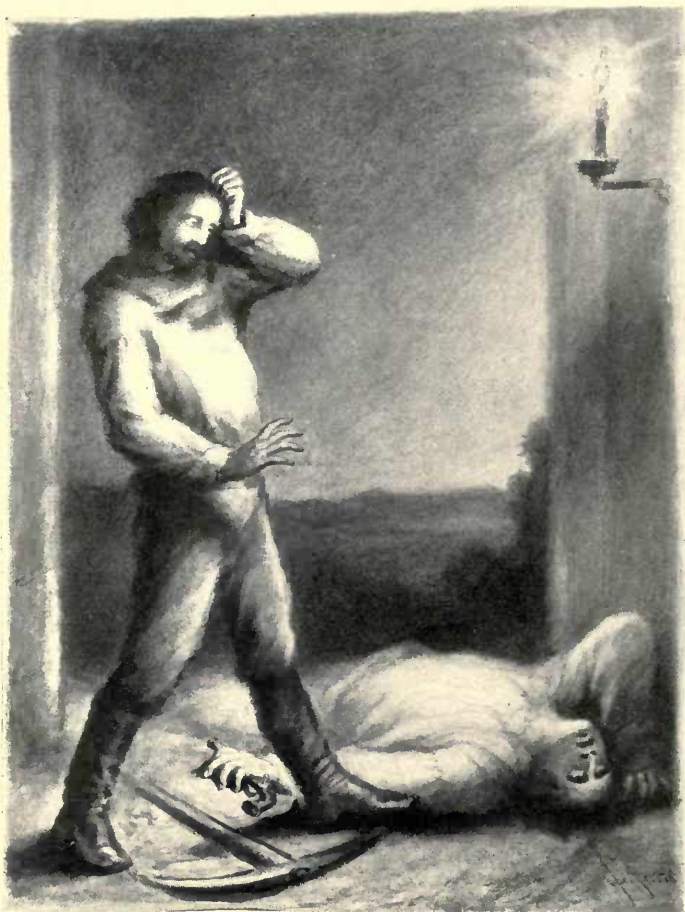
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There lay the stiffening body.

# A VICTIM OF CONSCIENCE

A Novel

BY

MILTON GOLDSMITH

Author of "Rabbi and Priest," etc.

1903

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## PREFACE.

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ENVIRONMENT and sympathy are important factors in an author's selection of a theme. If he has a message to the world, his characters cannot always be of his own choosing, but are determined by a power stronger than caprice. The desire to add to the world's knowledge of a peculiar people, to portray characters but little known and frequently misunderstood, to analyze a creed at variance with the prevailing faith, have influenced the choice of my subject.

My heroes and heroines are humble folk, with intensely human characteristics, with sterling qualities and corresponding shortcomings, and I introduce them to the reader without praise or apology.



In depicting the psychological effects of the crime committed by the principal actor in the story, I have endeavored to adhere to strict probabilities. "Conscience does make cowards of us all," and the vagaries of this conscience-coward, driven by remorse to seek relief in ceaseless activity, in superstition, and even in apostasy, are, I believe, in no wise exaggerated.

In drawing a distinction between differing creeds, I trust I shall not offend the susceptibilities of the devout of either; for I have endeavored to approach a difficult subject with reverent consideration.

MILTON GOLDSMITH.

# A VICTIM OF CONSCIENCE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SHLEMIEL.

"Alas! misfortune travels in a train,  
And oft in life forms one perpetual chain.  
Fear buries fear, and ills on ills attend,  
Till life and sorrow meet one common end."—*Young.*

THERE was a heavy, hesitating step upon the creaking staircase. The listening woman hastily turned up the lamp, revealing by its fitful glare the wretched barrenness of the room, and prepared to meet her husband with a brave smile of welcome.

"Dear Isaac," she said, taking him by both hands and affectionately kissing him, "I'm so glad you've come back."

The man's face brightened for a moment, only to be again immersed in gloom, as he gazed upon the evidences of poverty around him. He hung his hat upon a nail and sank into a chair, weary and disheartened.

There was little in the appearance of Isaac Schwartz to proclaim him a Jew. His features were clear cut, the brow high, and surmounted by a mass of wavy

black hair. His nose was well shaped, but his mouth was weak and his lips thin, indicative of indecision. The pallor of his face, due to fasting and privation, was heightened by the dark, curly beard which surrounded it. He had been a handsome man, but, as in the case of his wife, bodily suffering had left a deep impress, and his sordid surroundings, and seedy, threadbare attire, seemed to stamp him with the hopeless brand of poverty.

"Run and kiss papa, Josie," said the woman, to her four-year-old boy. Then she eagerly asked, "What luck, Isaac?"

"I have been unfortunate, as usual," returned the husband, moodily. "I have tried everything. I answered every advertisement in the papers, but found the situations taken. When the people saw my wretched clothes, they found some excuse to get rid of me. I went to the wharves, but there were five applicants for every vacancy. There is no use to try further. I am at my wit's end."

The woman longed to cheer him, but her heart was too full of sorrow to speak. There was a painful pause.

"To think it has come to this," cried Isaac, at length, with quivering lip, "that I should be forced to beg for work upon the wharves!"

"There is no shame in that," replied his wife. "If you could only have succeeded in getting work of any kind."

The man sighed, but did not reply. He was in no mood for conversation. Washing his hands, in obedience to religious precept, he sat down to his meagre supper.

His brow contracted, as a vague recollection of former plenty crossed his mind. Mechanically he broke a piece of bread, and, dipping it into the salt, said a short Hebrew prayer, according to the time-honored custom. His wife peeled a potato and laid it upon his plate; but he could not eat it; it seemed to choke him.

"Don't take it so to heart, Isaac," said his wife, trying to inspire hope with a smile. "Have you been at the office of the Relief Society?"

"Yes; they sent me to a place on Water Street, where a reliable man was wanted."

"Well?"

"When I got there the place was taken."

"Perhaps they know of another."

"They know of nothing else. When I told them of my great need, they offered me a couple of dollars. My God! have I been reduced to the necessity of taking alms—I, who have been so lavish in giving to others?"

Tears of mortification started to the unhappy man's eyes.

"Decidedly, Isaac," said the woman, between jest and earnest, "you are a Shlemiel."

"Yes, papa is a Shlemiel," echoed little Joe, catching the familiar word.

Isaac looked at his wife with an expression of such unutterable grief that she instantly felt sorry for the epithet she had used; but Joe repeated, in childish glee, "Poor papa is a Shlemiel!"

The word "Shlemiel," which has no synonym in our tongue, has a variety of meanings. An individual who,

through no fault of his own, is generally unfortunate in his undertakings; a person who is the innocent victim of a succession of mishaps; a clown, who is clumsy, ungraceful, awkward or careless; a blunderer, who is deficient in tact or address, and who, in spite of honest endeavors, is doomed to be unsuccessful—such a person is a Shlemiel. In short, the word designates him who harvests the thorns by the way, while his more fortunate neighbor garners in the fruit; who is constrained to be content with the skimmed milk of life, while another, perhaps less deserving, enjoys the cream. The word becomes a term of pity, of reproach, of contempt, according to the intonation of the speaker's voice, or the receptive mood of the person addressed.

Often had Mrs. Schwartz applied the title "Shlemiel" to her unfortunate husband in jest, and as often had he replied, "Yes, I am in hard luck; but things will change. It cannot always remain so." Then the term seemed but to convey a wife's sympathy, or, at most, a harmless raillery. But to-day, in his fit of dejection, the word had a different significance. It became a humiliating reproach, a stinging rebuke, and the man felt it keenly. He leaned his elbows upon the table, buried his face in his hands and sobbed like a child, while Joe looked up in innocent surprise, and Rose, in her cradle, awoke and cried in unison.

"Isaac, dear Isaac," said his wife, remorsefully, trying to comfort him. "I did not mean to hurt your feelings. It is not your fault that you are unfortunate. I know you are doing the best you can. Come, don't cry, husband."



"Let me weep, Lena," sobbed the man. "It has been coming on all day. Tears may relieve my breaking heart."

Lena continued her supper in silence. After a while he was quieter, but he could eat nothing. He sat in a corner with Joe on his lap, and listened to the child's merry prattle. Then, after the children had gone to sleep, Isaac sat with his face buried in his hands and gave himself over to gloomy reflections. He could not drive that hateful word "Shlemiel" out of his head. His own boy had reproached him with being a poor fool. Would he always be an unfortunate wretch? Would his first-born grow up to despise him and fling contempt at him? The lines upon his forehead deepened as he realized the wretchedness and hopelessness of his position.

"Isaac," said his wife, divining his thoughts, "do you not know that it is a sin to deplore our lot? You remember there is a passage in the Talmud which declares that, at our birth, the Lord decrees for each of us whether we are to be rich or poor. There is no use trying to escape God's decree."

"So it appears," said Schwartz, gloomily; "and yet I once thought that I was destined to become rich. Think of the comfort in which we lived in Germany, and contrast it with my present condition—poor, friendless, reduced to beggary!"

"Not friendless, Isaac. You have me and the children."

Lena moved her chair close to her husband's, and they sat hand in hand in the dark (for the lamp had

spluttered and gone out for the want of oil), and spoke of the past. "A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things," says the author of *Locksley Hall*, and truly there is no greater misery than recalling a happy past, midst the sorrows of a dismal present.

Ah, the past—the joyful, happy, the sad, weary, wretched past! It was now four years since they had emigrated from Bavaria. Isaac's father, old Meyer Schwartz, was a power in his native village of D——. He was in fair circumstances, and educated as far as education went in those days; for the Jews, rich and poor alike, were denied the privileges of the village schools, and were limited in their instruction to the teachings of their "Cheders" and the scraps of information which they could impart one to the other. Old Schwartz was a profound Talmud scholar, and was deemed as wise as he was devout, which was no equivocal compliment, for he was pious indeed. His little fortune had been honestly acquired by merchandising, and his house was known throughout Bavaria for its hospitality. There was a large family of children, of which Isaac was the oldest. It was the father's ambition to make a Rabbi of his first-born, but in spite of his earnest and painstaking instruction, Isaac never got beyond the general outlines of the law and the Talmud. Buying and selling afforded him more pleasure than poring over parchments, and, after a vain effort to keep him to his studies, old Schwartz reluctantly allowed him to follow his own inclinations. Isaac was an intelligent lad, quick at perception, and, like his father, very pious. He possessed grievous faults, however, greatest of which were

lack of decision and an exceedingly morbid sensibility. He was a moral coward, vacillating in his views, mistrusting his own opinions, and unusually sensitive in regard to adverse criticism. He would make up his mind to a course of action, only to change his intentions on the morrow, and in this indecision we shall find an explanation of his past failures and his future mishaps.

In those days the Jews in Germany had few rights and many grievances. Harsh measures were devised, stringent laws enacted to drive them out of the country, or at least to restrict their increase. The possession and cultivation of land, the study of a profession, the following of the fine arts, were all interdicted. Buying and selling, borrowing and lending, were the only channels in which the Israelites were allowed to exercise their ingenuity, and grievous was their condition in consequence. Worse still, a Jew was not allowed to marry until some co-religionist in the community had died or had moved away.

When, therefore, Isaac fell desperately in love with pretty Lena, and found his prospects of hymeneal happiness indefinitely delayed, he conceived a violent dislike to the government which could enact such unnatural laws. Lena was young, however, and agreed to wait until some of the superannuated relicts of the community should humanely make room for them. They waited, one, two, three years—nobody died, and nobody moved. The greatest blessing of a true love is the possibility of uniting the beloved heart with our own, of sharing its joys, of watching over and dispelling its doubts, of bearing its sorrows and burdens. Such a

love cannot be curbed by the arbitrary rulings of a bigoted government. Like a dammed-up torrent, it will oversweep its confines and force a path to happiness. Isaac was long undecided what course to pursue. Finally he could brook delay no longer.

"Lena, my beloved," he whispered one day, as they walked through the shaded glen near the village, "let us go to America! There the Jew is free; there the law will not step in and forbid our happiness. They say it is a land flowing with milk and honey, and fortunes are made in a year. Shall we go, my heart's beloved?"

Lena thought of the scenes of her happy childhood, of her sorrowing parents, to whom she would have to bid farewell forever; then, wiping away her tears, she looked bravely into the eyes of her betrothed and answered:

"I am ready, Isaac dear; let us go."

So it came to pass that in spite of old Schwartz's feeble remonstrances, and in spite of the short-lived objections of Lena's parents, Isaac and his bride packed up a modest outfit, were secretly married by the Rabbi, and, bidding their friends farewell, set sail for America.

A father's blessing, some well-meant advice, and a few hundred thalers of the old man's hard-earned and carefully saved money, accompanied the happy couple on their momentous journey. Four long years had passed since then. The money was dissipated, the blessing had failed to influence the wanderers' destinies, nought remained but the recollection of the father's advice, and a firm adherence to the minutest ceremonial of Judaism.

On their arrival in America, Isaac discovered that his German was of little benefit to him, while his superfi-

cial acquaintance with the Hebrew lore was absolutely useless. The few hundred thalers, however, were of inestimable value. They enabled him to furnish a room for his wife and to purchase a stock of merchandise, and following the example of other Jewish emigrants, he went peddling through the country. Alas! ill-luck attended him from the very outset. The miserable accommodations in the thinly populated regions through which lay his route were not adapted to orthodox piety, to a strict observance of the dietary laws imposed upon the Jews by their religion. Rather than break one of the multitudinous commands concerning the clean and the unclean, the permitted and the forbidden in the matter of food, the poor wanderer, whose physique had never been robust, under-nourished while he overworked his body. A long and dangerous malady, and a forcible detention at a hospitable farm-house, were the result, while Lena, ignorant of the cause of his long absence, pined away at home. A month later, Isaac, pale and weak, set out upon his homeward trip. Then, as though fate had not been sufficiently cruel, the unfortunate peddler was waylaid by footpads upon the highway, and unceremoniously relieved of his pack and money. A sorrowful return was that of poor Isaac. His wife scarcely recognized, in the haggard and miserable apparition, her luckless husband. Misfortune pursued him unrelentingly.

Four dreary years rolled by, years of poverty, of unrequited struggles, and while the poor man's family increased, his means, his strength and his courage steadily diminished. To-day, after a wearisome search



for employment—to-day Isaac felt, as he had never felt before, the hopeless misery of his condition. That word “Shlemiel” harassed him beyond measure. It implied what he had often told himself, that he was a shiftless, good-for-nothing, unfortunate being, a fool, who could not make a living for wife and children, a creature for whom the world had nought but contempt.

Lena tried to cheer him. She whispered words of encouragement and consolation.

“To-morrow will bring new hope,” she said. “Perhaps Mr. Blumen may know of something. At all events, you must not despair. It is a sin to doubt the goodness of God.”

“I will try again to-morrow,” was the husband’s tearful reply. “But it is of no use, no use!” He sighed miserably, and leaning his head upon his wife’s shoulder, broke into a paroxysm of tears.

The afflicted couple retired for the night, and before long Isaac knew by Lena’s peaceful breathing that she was beyond sorrow in the blessed land of dreams. Isaac could not sleep. His well-earned title, “Shlemiel,” kept him awake. Tears came to his eyes whenever he muttered the word—tears of shame at his deplorable condition, tears of grief at his wasted opportunities. He tried to recognize a blessing in his sufferings, but failed dismally in the attempt. That some natures might become fond of poverty and take it voluntarily for a bride, he knew; for Jewish as well as ancient history were full of such instances. Did not Diogenes discard all comforts and conveniences of life, and make his home in a cask? Did not Epaminondas refuse the

adulation of a nation, the proffered wealth of a grateful people, and voluntarily lead a life of self-denial and want? And the great Rabbis in Israel—their name was legion—did they not prefer the acquisition of learning to the accumulation of wealth, and lead for the most part the simple life of ascetics, voluntarily espousing poverty as the means of more surely leading a life of purity? Such abnegation, such a sacrifice of bodily comfort for spiritual welfare, found no sympathy in Isaac's heart. His nature craved after the material. The fortunes of his fellow-Israelites, many of them less generously endowed with mental advantages than himself, threw his own misery into greater relief. He yearned for comfort for his wife and babes. He felt within himself the ability to conquer adversity if he had but a chance. His ability, his talents, were not appreciated. His shabby attire, out at elbows and at toes, were to most people an indication of his worthlessness. No one believed in him, no one extended a helping hand. Hope itself was well nigh extinct.

Suddenly he sat bolt upright in bed. Hope revived! An idea—a monstrous, wild, silly idea—had entered his head. At first he rejected it; but the more he reflected, the more reasonable it became. All night long he debated with himself, viewing the matter in every conceivable light, impartially weighing the pros and cons; and when morning dawned his mind was fully made up. Away with indecision! He would carry out the plan. He would be a "Shlemiel" no longer.

"Lena, are you awake?" he cried, when at length day dawned.

"Yes; what is it?"

"I have an inspiration. My fortune is made."

Lena looked at her husband somewhat skeptically.

"I am going out West to California to dig for gold."

"Isaac, are you crazy?"

"No. I have come to my senses at last. Sam Johnson, our neighbor, came back from California last month a rich man. Since then the gold fever has been growing every day. Twenty men left the city last Monday for the gold-fields, and while I was down town yesterday I heard of another party of dissatisfied men who are going out next week to try their luck. I shall join them, and not come back until my fortune is made. We shall be rich, Lena—we shall be rich!"

Isaac hugged his wife in a transport of happiness, and poured into her eager but incredulous ear all his wonderful and Utopian schemes for amassing wealth. Failure seemed impossible.

"And what will become of me and the children in the meantime?" asked Lena, when her husband had exhausted his eloquence.

Isaac's face fell. In his imaginary search for gold he had not once thought of his wife and babes neglected at home. His glorious illusions faded before his eyes. There was no escaping fate. He would remain a "Shlemiel" to the end of the chapter.

But Lena had by this time become infected with her husband's enthusiasm. This was the year of 1850, shortly after America had been inflamed by the won-

derful reports of exhaustless gold mines in California. Hundreds of hardy pioneers had sought that far-off El Dorado, and hundreds of others were on their way to the land where, according to report, the rich, shining metal cropped invitingly out of every rock. In her mind's eye Lena saw her husband returning, tottering under the weight of a huge sack of gold. While Isaac had unfolded his wonderful ideas, the wretched room in which they lay appeared to brighten and to shine resplendently under the influence of their auriferous dream.

"I will not leave you, my wife!" cried Isaac, passionately. "I will remain with you!"

It was now Lena's turn to plead.

"It was a great idea, a true inspiration, my dear," she said. "God does not give wise counsels for us to reject them. Go out West and try your luck. It will be hard for me and the children, but we will bear it, with God's help."

"But you would starve in the meantime."

"No; I will make my living. Perhaps I shall go over to Mrs. Franzman. She is busy in her shop all day, and needs some one to do her housework. She told me so yesterday. I am not afraid of work, and the room which is large enough for me will also hold Joe and Rose."

"And the money for the trip!" Isaac exclaimed.

Again the faces of the unfortunate couple fell.

"I had forgotten about that. It will cost quite a fortune to go out West."

"Go to Rabbi Kauffman. Perhaps he can get the money for you."

"Lena, you have a great mind. Rabbi Kauffman was a friend of father's, and I know he will do what he can for me."

Isaac arose and made his toilet. His hands trembled so with excitement that he could hardly dress, and when he began to put on his phylacteries, without which no pious Hebrew says his morning prayers, he got them hopelessly tangled about his arm. At length they were satisfactorily adjusted, and facing the east, he chanted a prayer in a sing-song voice. "Lead us back to Palestine, the promised land," was the burden of his chant; but, though he looked towards the East, his thoughts were in the far, unknown West, and while his lips muttered the talismanic word, "Jerusalem," his spirit smilingly surveyed the golden hills of California.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE FUND.

"From the prayer of want and plaint of woe,  
Oh, never, never turn away thine ear!  
Forlorn in this bleak wilderness below,  
Ah, what were man, should heaven refuse to hear!"  
—*Beatti.*

AS EARLY as was consistent with social etiquette (that much-abused term), Isaac called on the Rabbi, Israel Kauffman. He found that worthy gentleman at breakfast with his wife and seven children, ranging in age from ten years down to the baby in a high chair.

"*Sholem alekem*" (peace to you), cried the Rabbi, hospitably, when his visitor appeared at the door. "Come right in."

It was a modest room into which Isaac entered, but what a delightful contrast to his own bleak apartment! Here all was cheerful, and the very wall paper, with its large, old-fashioned garlands of impossible flowers, breathed contentment. The furniture was old and scanty, and there were no curtains at the windows, but a few pictures of religious subjects, such as a fanciful restoration of Solomon's Temple and a fine bust portrait of Moses, formed out of the words of Genesis, in Hebrew, gave a quaint charm to the walls. A turkey red cover over the dining-table brightened the place

wonderfully, and on the sideboard stood an abundance of old silver, heirlooms of the Rabbi's family, which at once lifted the owner out of any suspicion of poverty and gave him a certain standing in the community as a man of tangible means. The Rabbi himself deserves more than a passing notice. He was a tall, thin man, of impressive appearance, whose hair and long beard were beginning to turn gray with the bleaching influence of time. There was little suggestive of the Hebrew in his face; no distinctly rabbinical lines. His nose was inclined to be aquiline; his eyes beamed with good humor, and his well-shaped lips were rarely without a benignant smile. In the old country Mr. Kauffman had been a Rabbi in a small and uninfluential town, and, realizing the growing importance of America as a refuge for persecuted Judaism, he had wisely transferred his family and his allegiance to the new world.

His opinions, while inclining to orthodoxy, were tolerant. He believed in deed as superior to creed, and in his daily intercourse with the world endeavored to hold up the Jew as a man worthy of the world's respect.

His wife was an estimable, matronly little woman, indefatigable in doing good, the embodiment of charity, and an ardent admirer of her husband's every word and action.

"Pardon, if I interrupt!" said Schwartz, nervously, speaking in German, as was his wont with his fellow Israelites; "but I wanted—"

"Have you breakfasted yet?" interrupted the Rabbi, noting the other's half-starved appearance.

“Yes ; that is to say—”

“Even if you have broken your fast, a cup of coffee will not be amiss. Come and join us.”

“Norah,” called Mrs. Kauffman to the servant in the kitchen, “bring a plate and a cup and saucer. Ben, move up and bring a chair. There, Mr. Schwartz, sit down, and don’t be bashful.”

When a plate appeared, it was generously filled with edibles, and for fifteen minutes Schwartz was so congenially occupied that he forgot the immediate object of his visit.

“My, don’t he eat a lot !” said Ben, with a chuckle, to his brother Sol.

“Hush !” whispered his father ; and, as if to eradicate the painful impression of the remark, he said to his guest, “You seem to enjoy the cake. Let me help you to another portion. My wife is an expert at baking. She hasn’t her equal.”

“Perhaps your wife would like a piece,” said Mrs. Kauffman, who knew how seldom dainties found their way into the Schwartz household. “Ben, get a piece of paper.”

And, while Ben rummaged the cupboard for an old newspaper, Mrs. Kauffman cut the cake in half, and supplemented the slice with a half-dozen apples from the sideboard. Isaac’s eyes were filled with tears of gratitude.

“Thank you !” he said. “Lena and the children will enjoy it.”

After the meal had ended the Rabbi conducted his guest to the parlor. It was a small room, as old-fash-

ioned as was the dining-room. One wall was completely covered with an array of old books and parchments, black with age and assiduous handling. The morning sun shone in through the daintily-hung curtains, and the old furniture glowed with cheer.

"Sit down, Schwartz," said the Rabbi, moving a red-covered easy-chair to the table for his guest, while he took a seat opposite. "What can I do for you?"

A good meal at the outset of his quest appeared to Schwartz as an excellent augury, and he lost no time in acquainting the Rabbi with his projects, becoming eloquent as he dwelt upon the certainty of success.

The latter said not a word, but stroked his beard thoughtfully until his guest had quite finished.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Isaac, with some trepidation.

"Do you want my candid opinion? Well, then, I do not believe you are the man for that sort of thing."

"Why not?"

"Because innumerable hardships will beset you. It is a life which requires a robust constitution, steady nerves and indomitable will-power, and I am afraid you do not possess these attributes."

"I see you, too, consider me a Shlemiel," cried the poor fellow, despondently, his eyes filling with tears.

"Nothing of the kind. There is no such thing as a Shlemiel. You are in momentary hard luck, but when Opportunity knocks at your door, I believe she will find you ready to admit her."

"Well, then, this is my opportunity!" Schwartz arose, with a feeling akin to exaltation, as he spoke.

"I will be a Shlemiel no longer. I may be physically weak, but I have a stout heart, and the recollection of my starving wife and babies will spur me on."

"But think of the dangers and hardships."

"Slow starvation is harder."

"Suppose you find no gold?"

"Then I am no worse off than at present. Am I not reduced to beggary? There is gold in abundance out there, and I will find it."

"But the money for the trip?" cried the Rabbi, seeing that further remonstrance was useless.

"Ah! there's the difficulty. That is what I came to see you about."

"But, my dear Schwartz, I can't afford to—"

"No, of course not," interrupted Schwartz; "but you might go to the prominent Jews in town and collect money enough to send me to California. I cannot ask them myself; it would seem too much like begging. See, Rabbi, I was once as well off as any of these men, and it cuts me to the heart to ask them for money. Will you do it for me? They will never lose a penny of it. It is a loan which I will repay tenfold."

"It is a thankless job, but I will try," said Mr. Kauffman, reluctantly.

"Thank you! Will you do it at once? The matter is urgent. A party of prospectors will leave here next Tuesday, and I should like to go with them."

The Rabbi promised, and Isaac in his joy kissed the good man's hand.

"Don't forget the cake for your wife," he cried, good humoredly, "and come this evening for your answer."



After Schwartz had gone, the Rabbi put on his hat, a tall, silk chimney-pot, invariably brushed against the grain, without which the pastor was never seen upon his errands of mercy, and hastened to Cedar Street to tempt fortune in Schwartz's behalf.

Thither we will accompany him and incidentally become acquainted with half a dozen of the most important members of his flock. And here the chronicler pauses to impress upon the reader the fact that he will not be led into palaces of gilded splendor or gardens of brilliant hue. He will not mingle with lords of lofty lineage, or with bejeweled ladies of stately mien. Were my characters of my own choosing, I would select the most unexceptional heroes and heroines to carry out my plans, endow them with every grace and virtue, and create an environment so perfect that this workaday world of ours would blush at its surroundings in comparison. I must be satisfied, alas, to relate a simple story about simple folk in a simple manner, and if the characters are coarse and the details commonplace, they are none the less a reflection of actualities ungilded by the glamor of an exalted imagination.

My brush must be content to paint a picture of unassuming people, with faults and virtues, serious shortcomings and sterling qualities, people who live, breathe and exercise their influence in this world, and whom, though the world may misunderstand, it must perforce honor for their pure and charitable lives and their lofty ideals.

Do not imagine, however, that these simple folk lack a noble ancestry.

Many of them have a pedigree which would dim the lustre of the proudest descendant of May Flower Pilgrims, for it goes back to the great King David, the Anointed of God. Here is a gray-bearded patriarch, who, in spite of his poverty, blesses his co-religionists in the synagogue every festival, and who can trace his ancestry back in an unbroken line to Aaron, the first High Priest, whose family God ordained to be priests forever in the house of Israel. But he is not conceited on that account, though he is a little proud of his family ties. Some philosopher has wisely said that a man who boasts of his ancestors, and lays his claims for consideration on their deeds, is like a growing potato—the best of him is under ground.

The stream of Jewish immigration to this country in 1850 had not yet assumed the importance it acquired in later years. A small number of Hebrews had settled in America long before the Revolution, and were comfortably endowed with the world's goods and even prominent in commercial affairs.

There were prosperous colonies of Sephardim (Jews of Spanish descent) in nearly all of the eastern cities at the beginning of the century. It was not, however, until 1830 that considerable numbers of German Jews, driven from their native land by bigotry and intolerance, came to America to seek a haven of rest and security. The revolution of 1848, with its attendant excesses, drove still more Jews from Germany's borders, and at the time our story opens there were numerous thrifty, industrious and intelligent Israelites in all of the principal towns of the new world—Israelites who, coming here

for the most part poor, friendless and ignorant of the language, strove pluckily onward until they became leaders in the world of commerce and of finance, a blessing to the land of their adoption.

The town of B—— numbered about eight hundred Jews at this period. Of these perhaps a fourth were Sephardim, who viewed with disfavor the advent of so many uncultured and barbaric Ashkanazim. Proud of their aristocratic descent from the martyrs of the Spanish Inquisition, these Sephardim held aloof from the unpedigreed newcomers, who differed from them in many ways. They scarcely admitted that these German emigrants were Jews, for did not their ritual, their beliefs, yea, their very pronunciation of the Holy Tongue, differ from their own?

But the newcomers, undaunted by the frigid reception on the part of their co-religionists, pushed manfully to the front. They grew in numbers, in culture, in power, and before long compelled the Sephardim to admit that "All Israel is one family."

Cedar and Pearl Streets were the principal thoroughfares in which the German Jews of B—— had settled. Cedar Street ran parallel with the river and was the commercial artery of the town. It was the street of shops, one adjoining the other, as though to accentuate the ties that bound these wanderers together. Above many of the stores lived the proprietors with their families, and from early morning until late at night the traffic surged uninterruptedly. Enterprising fathers stood before their merchandise-littered doors and persuaded the wary passers-by to enter. Stout mothers, energetic

sons and buxom daughters stood on the inside and temptingly displayed such wares as in their opinion would interest the prospective customer. When the business outgrew its narrow quarters, the entire house was converted into an "Emporium of Fashion." Competent clerks succeeded to wife and children, and the family, rising in the social scale as it rose in affluence, moved into Pearl Street, where more commodious dwellings housed them.

There were half a dozen minor streets in which Israelites dwelt, but to be in business on Cedar Street and to reside on Pearl Street was in itself a title to distinction.

The indigent Jews, of whom, like our poor Isaac Schwartz, there were a dozen or more families, lived with their equally poor Christian brethren several blocks farther south, on Oak Street. Here bare and dismal quarters, in tottering and insalubrious buildings, could be rented for a trifle, and here poverty stalked by day and misery watched by night, and joy was a stranger to the inhabitants. On Charlotte Street, around the corner from Pearl, stood the Ashkanazim Synagogue, an unpretentious structure, formerly used as a warehouse, but remodeled by the aid of a stucco front and painted windows into a very respectable-looking house of worship. Rabbi Kauffman lived in a dwelling immediately adjoining. He was the spiritual adviser of the German colony, and while not a man of profound erudition or special eloquence, he was beloved and revered by his congregation.

The Sephardim, or, as they preferred to call them-

selves, the "Portuguese Jews," had their own synagogue in a more aristocratic section of the town.

In spite of the early hour, the streets were teeming with people, for it was market day, and the surrounding country had sent its quota of traffic. As the Rabbi passed along the street he was greeted by salutations from every door, for every man, woman and child knew and loved the old gentleman. He declined all overtures to come in and talk until he reached the store of Chaim Rosenheim, and there he entered.

As Parnass (president) of the congregation and a prominent merchant, Mr. Rosenheim was a man of great importance in the community. The first characteristic which struck one in the gentleman's face was its air of good humor and contentment. A stout, globe-like head, surmounting a stouter body, the whole supported by short and sturdy legs; such was his personality. His nose was perhaps the jolliest feature of his face, and peeped merrily from between two twinkling blue eyes, whose utility was reinforced by a pair of heavy-rimmed gold spectacles. His hair was gray, almost white, and his face was innocent of beard, except for an inch of white whisker on each ruddy cheek. His position as president and his standing as a well-to-do clothing dealer gave him a certain sense of dignity, which he endeavored to display in his attitude and bearing. From an educational standpoint he was sadly deficient. He had not drunk deep at the Pierian spring. His English, while fairly accurate grammatically, was by no means perfect; but of this he remained in blissful ignorance. He had never succeeded in adapting his



Teutonic tongue to the pronunciation of the "th," which he usually pronounced hard, and his "w" partook of the nature of "v." His important utterances usually began with "I tell you vot it is," and most arguments were clinched by a quotation, more or less accurate, from the Talmud.

He was a whole-souled, energetic, charitable man, who by sheer force of will power had risen from poverty to affluence, from obscurity to influence.

Mr. Rosenheim was waiting on a customer, a weakened little Irish woman, holding an overgrown boy of twelve by the hand.

"Dis is a boutiful suit, madam," he said, surveying it fondly, "and yust de fit."

"Phat's the price of it?"

"It ought to bring ten dollars, but you can have it for six."

"Do yez t'ink Oi'm a millionaire?" exclaimed the lady, indignantly. "Show me a suit for about four dollars."

Mr. Rosenheim was sorely pressed to find a suit at this price. He rummaged through innumerable shelves, until he finally discovered a combination of coat, pants and vest, which had long reposed, unwept, unhonored and unsung, in a corner. It was a cheap suit, printed in an ugly mixture of green, yellow and black, faded in streaks, and its garishness toned down by a generous sprinkling of dust. Time was when this suit would have commanded at least eight dollars; but, having outlived its pristine glory, Mr. Rosenheim reluctantly resigned himself to selling it as a bargain.

"Here is someding dot vill please you," he said, trying the coat on the boy. The sleeves were a little short, but that could be remedied.

"Oi loike the color av thot," said the lady, in whom the green awakened patriotic sentiments; "but Oi'm afeard th' moths 'll get inter th' goods."

"Oh, no, ma'am!" responded Rosenheim, with an emphatic gesture of negation. "If any moths get in dot suit, dey starve to death!"

"Is thot so?" asked the lady, but half convinced.

"It's true, ma'am. Besides, dot green color is Paris green, and is warranted to kill any moths vot ain't already starved. If you find any moths, yust bring back dot suit and get your money again."

"How mooch did you say?"

"Four dollars, ma'am," responded Rosenheim, rubbing his hands in expectation.

"Oi'll give yez foor an' a half, an' not a cint more," replied the lady, with an assumption of stern inflexibility.

"Vy, I only asked you four dollars, ma'am," said the merchant, so surprised that for a moment he lost sight of his advantage.

"Aw! was it foor dollars yez said? Will thin Oi'll give yez t'ree an' a half, an' thot's th' best."

But Rosenheim was obdurate and won the day. The lady slowly produced four dollars, which he hastily put into the money-drawer, as though fearing a reconsideration of the transaction; and while Izzy, his son, a promising young man of nineteen, wrapped up the bundle, Rosenheim turned to the amused Rabbi.

"How are you?" he asked, shaking his visitor's hand vigorously.

"Well, thank you," answered the Rabbi. "It must tax your ingenuity considerably to sell clothing."

"Oh, I should t'ink so!" cried the merchant, sitting on a counter and waving the Rabbi to a stool. "You t'ink maybe you have trouble in writing dose sermons you make on a 'Shabbos,' eh? Vell, I tell you vot it is: it takes more ingenoidy to sell a suit of clothes den it does to write a speech. And den it takes twice de trouble to collect de money after you trust out de goods."

"I thought you didn't trust," said the Rabbi, pointing to several large signs adorning the walls, which bore such legends as "Old Trust is dead; poor pay killed him," "We trust in God and sell for cash," etc.

"Dot's all talk. If I didn't trust, Jake Bergthal would do all de business. Vot does de Talmud say? *Hayom Katzer dober*. Vell, vot's de difference vot de Talmud says? It means, 'Time is money.' Dot is de reason so many people buy on time, I suppose."

Mr. Rosenheim's knowledge of the Talmud was fragmentary, yet he constantly quoted such scraps as occurred to his memory, usually getting as far as the first two or three words, and then continuing in a damaged vernacular. He handed the Rabbi a cigar and lit one himself.

"Well, Mr. Kauffman," he said, at length, "vot can I do for you?"

Thereupon Mr. Kauffman explained his errand, while the merchant listened incredulously.

"Vot!" he cried, at length; "Schwartz go to California to find gold? Dot's a good joke! Some men are not satisfied to stay at de foot of de ladder, but dey want to go down still lower."

"Poor Schwartz is so badly off that he can't get any lower," said the Rabbi, in a tone of genuine commiseration.

"He is 'Meshugga' (crazy). Vot does he know about California? Vy, it dakes a gold mine to get out dere. It must be nearly a thousand miles. I tell you vot it is: de fool-killer is getting so far behind in his vork dot he vill have to vork on 'Shabbos' to catch up."

"I thought as you did at first," replied the Rabbi; "but unless we do this for Schwartz, he and his family are apt to become a charge on the congregation. He may come back a rich man." And the Rabbi, who was now thoroughly imbued with the practicability of the plan, continued to argue until Rosenheim finally admitted:

"Dere is noddin' more uncertain den a doubtful t'ing, und maybe it is a good idea, after all."

"And how much will you give? Only as a loan, you know."

"How mooch vill it take?"

"It may take a hundred dollars," said the Rabbi, whose own ideas on the subject were indefinite.

"Vell, put me down for one of de noughts," and Rosenheim laughed at his own sense of humor.

"Is that all?" asked the Rabbi, disappointed.

"No; put a one in front of it. Here are ten dollars

—never mind de t'anks! Come around to see us soon. My wife was complaining of your lack of sociability.”

And he bowed the Rabbi out.

Mr. Kauffman next called on Mr. Solomon Basch, who kept a dry goods and notion store, three doors farther down the street. In spite of the chilly atmosphere, Mr. Basch stood on the pavement in his shirt-sleeves, alert to grasp a chance customer. He deferentially escorted the Rabbi in-doors. Mrs. Basch was sitting within the shop, knitting a wool bed-cover of aggressively inharmonious colors. She was a little, wrinkled, sallow-faced woman, with a nose that might have hailed from the Emerald Isle instead of a Bavarian Ghetto, and a smile that displayed an elaborate set of sparkling teeth, at a time when such teeth were a comparative luxury and rather expensive. She wore a coal-black, highly-polished “sheitel,” or wig, which, with orthodox Jewesses, is a badge of wifely loyalty and virtuous fealty to matrimonial ties. She was an energetic little woman, with a quick temper, a wonderful talent for business, and a mania for knitting. Stockings, quilts, cushions, covers, jackets, and a host of equally useful articles, of all shades and combinations of hues, grew under her tireless fingers and found a ready sale; for, at that epoch, machine-made commodities had not as yet demoralized the tastes and demands of discriminating customers.

Her husband was a tall, thin, angular individual, with a physiognomy whose typical features more than compensated Judaism for the apostacy of his wife's countenance. He lacked his wife's ability, and looked up to her spiritually, even while his superior height



enabled him to look down upon her physically. He stood very much in awe of his wife's tongue, and she made no secret of her contempt for his lack of energy.

"Good day, Rabbi," said Mrs. Basch, in German; for, in spite of their five years' sojourn in America, neither husband nor wife spoke English. "What's the news?"

"Very little news, Mrs. Basch," replied the Rabbi, taking a chair. "Busy, as usual, I see."

"There's always work to do. Isn't it pretty?"

"Gorgeous!" replied the Rabbi, truthfully. "How came you to knit so many colors together?"

"I bought the wool at an auction sale, and got it for a bargain." Then, turning to her husband, she asked, sharply, "What's all that noise in the basement, Solomon?"

"Mrs. Schneefelder's boys are playing hide-and-seek in a lot of packing boxes," replied Solomon, scenting trouble.

"Who told them they might? Did you?"

"Well—er—they asked me whether Reuben and Abe were down stairs, and I told them to go and see."

"You fool! We haven't noise enough of our own, eh? I just sent Reuben and Abe over to Schneefelder's, in order to get rid of them. Go down and tell those boys to go home at once; and if they won't go, put them out."

Solomon meekly did as he was requested. There was a sound of a scuffle in the cellar, and soon two begrimed urchins were led up the cellar stairs by Mr. Basch, who held persistently to an ear of each, and

were unceremoniously ejected into the street, where they vented their indignant anger in howls and jeers.

"Of course their mother will come along directly and make a fuss," said Mrs. Basch, addressing her guest; "but what do I care! I have children enough of my own, without having the whole neighborhood in my cellar. Am I not right?"

The peace-loving Rabbi admitted that she probably was, and, without much circumlocution, stated his errand.

"Now," he said, in conclusion, "Mr. Basch, how much will you contribute toward sending Schwartz to California?"

It was merely a delicate compliment on the Rabbi's part to appeal to the husband. Basch was so surprised in being considered in a matter requiring judgment, that he stood dumbfounded for an instant; then he meekly said, "Ask my wife."

"Not a cent!" cried Mrs. Basch, in indignation. "Let the 'Shnorrer' go to work."

"Pardon me; it is to avoid becoming a 'Shnorrer' that Schwartz wished to undertake this difficult trip. After all, we are all 'Shnorrers,' inasmuch as we are all dependent on the bounty of the Most High, and it is our duty to help those less fortunate than ourselves."

"Well, well, perhaps you are right; but what can such a fellow do in California? Find gold, indeed!"

"Gold don't always bring happiness," said Basch, meekly glancing at his wife.

"No; but it has one advantage over poverty. It doesn't prevent happiness," replied the Rabbi. "Come,

contribute something. When Schwartz comes back a rich man, you will be happy to know you helped him to success. Perhaps some day you will be glad to have his son lead your daughter under the 'chuppa' (wedding canopy)."

Mrs. Basch found numerous objections, but finally relented, and, going to the cash-drawer behind the counter, brought out a dollar in small specie, which she counted slowly and effectively into the Rabbi's hand.

"May God requite your kindness, and may Schwartz some day be in a position to repay it," said the minister, putting the money into his pocket.

At that moment Mrs. Schneefelder walked into the store. She carried a wicker basket, and was on her way to do her marketing. She, too, wore a "sheitel" of dark brown, beneath which a few straggling gray locks peeped. Her English, like that of Mrs. Basch's, was too elementary for use, and the ladies conversed in German, picturesquely interlarded with Hebrew words.

"I hope you ain't 'broges' (angry)," said Mrs. Basch, who thought she detected a scowl of ire on her friend's face.

"Why should I be 'broges'?" replied the other, unsuspectingly.

"Because I just threw your two sons out of my house."

"Well, that's all right. I just threw your Reuben and Abe out of my back-yard. They were making 'shtuss' (nonsense) with the cat, and I couldn't stand the noise any longer."

"Well, then we are even," replied Mrs. Basch, with

suppressed resentment, evidently not at all pleased at the summary treatment accorded her own offspring.

"Your Abe is a very bad boy," said Mrs. Schneefelder, with the air of positive conviction on so important a subject.

"He ain't a bit worse than your Ikey," retorted Mrs. Basch, with a tug at her "sheitel," a gesture which usually betokened an incipient storm.

Here the Rabbi, fearing to be the witness of a verbal duel, waged in defence of the respective merits of the children, took his hat and his leave.

Solomon Basch accompanied him to the street and whispered, when he was safely outside, "Tell Schwartz that I envy him; I wish I could go with him."

"And leave your wife?" asked the Rabbi, amused.

Basch nodded affirmatively, and stroked his beard meditatively.

"Yes!" he said, at length. "That woman's lips are a rose, but her tongue is a thorn."

The Rabbi smiled.

"It is difficult to understand women," he said, pacifically.

"That's so! Only a fool thinks he can understand women, and the only way to argue with one is to go away and not argue at all. Some one said that woman is the weaker sex. He was an idiot. My wife can strike a harder blow with her tongue than I can with my fist."

Poor Basch glanced furtively in the direction of the door, started to say more, but suddenly relapsed into silence; while the Rabbi resumed his visits to other

members of his flock. He met with varying success, receiving, however, more liberal responses than refusals. He spent some time in the store of Louis Ehrlich—a different type of merchant from those whose acquaintance we have just made.

Ehrlich was a young man of prepossessing appearance and address. He had been suspected of taking an active part in the revolutionary movement in Berlin in 1848, and had been given a quiet hint by the authorities that his room was more desirable than his company; so he emigrated to America. There his liberty-loving instincts found a fertile field. He had brought nothing with him but his willing hands, a clear head and a fair amount of learning, and in less than two years found himself the possessor of a thriving shop and on the road to a competency. His first self-imposed task was to master an English education, and for this purpose he diligently frequented night-school and associated with cultured Americans. In appearance Ehrlich was a broad-chested, muscular fellow of twenty-eight, nearly six feet in height, with the erect dignity and bearing of a soldier. His brown hair, reddish moustache, blue eyes, straight nose and small features conspired to make him totally unlike the typical Hebrews of Cedar Street. He was by no means an Antinous, but when he smiled he displayed the beauty which belongs to an honest, good-humored, intelligent face. He dressed neatly, was generous, yet thrifty, and was thoroughly imbued with the necessity of progress in all things scientific, educational and religious. He was a representative of a class of Jews of whom thousands came to this country at that



epoch, and whose names have since become synonymous with honesty, integrity and thrift. He and the Rabbi were staunch friends, each appreciating the good qualities of the other.

"I have taken the liberty to mention your name as a new board member of the synagogue," said Mr. Kauffman, after the first salutation had passed. "I hope you will not refuse the honor."

"No; I shall be glad to serve, not as an honor, but as a duty. I have no idea, however, that I shall be elected. Rosenheim, Blumen, and the rest of the board are too well acquainted with my radical views. I'm afraid the innovations I would propose in the general conduct of the synagogue affairs would shock their sense of the eternal fitness of things."

"On account of that very fact, I shall do my utmost to have you elected. Israel is fast becoming a valley of dry bones, and it requires a new prophet to clothe these bones with tissue and revive them."

"I admit the necessity," said Ehrlich. "My father was a pupil of Moses Mendelssohn, and I have been a personal friend of Geiger and Einhorn, so that it is not strange that some reform ideas should cling to me. I yearn for the time when the excrescences clinging to Israel's faith shall have been stripped away, and I believe America is the field in which Judaism will be rejuvenated."

"Be careful, my friend. Don't go to extremes. I myself believe many reforms are possible, nay desirable; but in cutting away dead flesh one is apt to cut into the living tissue and leave a wound through which the patient bleeds to death."

"Never fear," replied Ehrlich. "I shall not go too far. Let me but get on the board, and I shall gradually try to pave the way to a clearer understanding of Israel's ideals."

"And what changes would you suggest?" asked the pastor.

"I would first purge the ritual of obsolete and antiquated prayers that have outgrown their usefulness. Why should a man storm the doors of heaven for a speedy return to Jerusalem, when he is happy and prosperous in America? It is unpatriotic. I would next introduce a number of prayers in German or English, so that the younger generation, whose knowledge of Hebrew is limited, may pray knowingly."

"So far I agree with you," said the Rabbi.

"I would make the services attractive to the old and young by introducing an organ and choral music."

The Rabbi held up his hands in horror.

"I would then," continued the young man, "make the worshipers more comfortable by removing their hats, the men more contented by allowing them to sit next to their wives and sweethearts."

"Stop, stop!" cried the Rabbi, with a mixed sentiment of amusement and alarm. "Do you want to do away with everything that is sacred?"

Ehrlich laughed. "Did I frighten you?" he said. "Only wait; these things will come quickly. The synagogue wants new blood and new ideas. Yes, count on me as a board member!" And he added, with a smile, "If I am elected."

The Rabbi started to leave.

"Oh, by the way," said the Rabbi, "I had quite forgotten the object of my visit." And he proceeded to relate the story of his protégé.

Ehrlich listened, amused. "Schwartz has the proper spirit. Rather be a mine-owner in the West than a pauper in the East. I admire the man's pluck. Here is my contribution towards the voyage," he said, handing the Rabbi a generous sum. "May he spread the name of Israel through the Occident and prosper."

"With such men as Ehrlich in the fold, the name of Israel will never be degraded," said the Rabbi, when he again found himself on the sidewalk. "I hope he will succeed in imbuing the pillars of my congregation with his views and his enthusiasm."

Not far away was Jacob Bergthal's clothing store. This was but half the size of Rosenheim's, but in the opinion of its proprietor was greater in every respect. The sign read, "Bergthal's Mammoth Clothing Emporium," and the printed business cards declared it to be the largest clothing house in America. This was but Oriental hyperbole; nevertheless, Bergthal endeavored to live up to his boast by outdoing his rival, Rosenheim, whenever possible. Even in the matter of language his errors were conspicuously greater than those of his competitor. When Bergthal spoke English, the ground was fairly strewn with disjointed parts of speech. He was an undersized, wiry little man, with prematurely gray hair, a closely-cropped beard, a high, strident voice and a quick, nervous manner. He was always carefully, even dandily dressed, and disproved by his appearance the prevalent belief that clothiers

need necessarily wear poor clothes. He and Rosenheim were not on speaking terms. Time was when they were fast friends, but even Damon and Pythias would have fallen out had they been competitors in the clothing business. Rosenheim, with his generous nature and with the magnanimity of the greater man, harbored no ill will; but Bergthal, excitable and suspicious, saw in every act of his rival a personal affront, and resented it accordingly.

As Rabbi Kauffman entered, after carefully stepping over a sleeping dog that lay on the threshold, he found Bergthal in the heat of an argument with a customer—a negative customer—one who had brought back an unsatisfactory garment. He was a chocolate-colored gentleman, of frayed appearance, and was very deliberate in his speech.

“Yas, sah,” he cried, “jis’ as I don’ tole you—I don’ bought dis yer triangle suit hyar las’ Chusday, an’ when I got it hum, my wife, she sez, sez she, ‘I ’clar’ to gracious dis yer suit am full of moths!’ Now look a-hyar, boss, I don’ want no moths in my close nohow.”

Bergthal put a jaunty pair of eye-glasses on his nose and inspected the suit perfunctorily.

Finally he cried, in his high-pitched accents:

“Mine frient, you didn’t bot dot suit here.”

“Yas, I did, sho ’nuf, boss. I bot it right hyar las’ Chusday.”

“Un’ you say it is full of moths?”

“Yas, sah—dey’s several holes in it.”

“Mine frient, you didn’t bot dot suit from me; you bot it from Mr. Rosenheim, down der street. He keeps

his moths in his diagonal suits ; I keep mine always in my corduroy pantaloons. Everybody knows his own bissness best, don'd it?"

"Yas, sah, I s'pose dey does."

"How much you pay for dem close?"

"Eight dollars and t'ree levies, boss."

"Vell, dot vas cheap enough. Vot vas you kicking about, anyvay? Rosenheim didn't charge you nodding for der moths. Go home once and your shtars t'ank id didn't cost you ten dollars." And hurriedly wrapping up the suit, he bowed the astonished customer out.

"How are you, Mr. Kauffman?" said Bergthal, when the coast was clear.

"Very well, thank you. How's business?"

"Bissness? I'll tell you. If bissness vasn't any better next veek as it vill be last veek, I vas 'mechulla' (bankrupt). Dat's vat I hope."

This enigmatic reply rather amused the Rabbi, who broke into a hearty laugh.

"Is it as bad as that? Why, I was just in at Rosenheim's, and he assured me that he was rushed with trade, and was doing the biggest business in the city."

"Rosenheim tole you dot, hey? He tole you a lie. I done twice so much bissness as Rosenheim last month, und I can prove it. Rosenheim is a 'shauta' (fool). He has a swelled head. You can tole him I said so. Vat can I do for you, Mr. Kauffman?"

"I came for money," said the Rabbi.

"Sh! Not so sudden. Bad news like dot is like an



egg vot's soft-boiled. It must be broke gentle. Vot's der trouble now?"

Mr. Kauffman told of Schwartz's plans.

"I'll gif nod a cent!" said Bergthal, before the other had quite finished explaining.

"That's what Mr. Rosenheim said; but he finally gave me quite a contribution."

"Is dot so?" said Bergthal, thoughtfully. "Rosenheim vas always a bluffer. How much he gave?"

"Ten dollars."

Bergthal winced; but he was not to be outdone by his hated rival.

"Mr. Kauffman," he said, pulling a plethoric wallet from the inside pocket of his coat, "here is ten dollars und a heluf. Please put my name down on der list before Rosenheim's. Bergthal's Mammoth Clothing Emporium don't vas going to shtand behind dot miserable establishment down der street. No, sir-ee!"

"The Lord loves a cheerful giver," said the Rabbi.

"Vell, I guess I vas so cheerful aboud it as Rosenheim. My, dot man vas so mean dot he vould sold a pair of stockings for a cardigan jacket, if peebles vould be so foolish as to pelieve him! Must you go alretty? Vell, good-by, Rabbi! Coom soon again, ven you don'd vant noddings."

Left alone, Bergthal rubbed his hands in glee to think how he had outdone his rival. At heart he was a generous man, and had often pitied Schwartz's contrary luck. Suddenly he had an inspiration. Bare-headed and excited, he ran into the street and called the Rabbi back.

"Mr. Kauffman," he said, "has Schwartz a decend suit of cloding got alretty to travel in?"

"I think not," the other said. "When I saw him this morning he looked rather seedy."

"Aha!" Bergthal stood for a moment, as it were, 'twixt love and duty, swayed by the contending spirits of parsimony and charity. Then he said: "Just tell Schwartz around here to come und get a suit of cloding. I got a suit, just a little faded, vot I gif him for a bresend. Mit dot suit he vill have 'massel and broche' (luck and blessing) in der Vest. I don'd allow dot rascal Rosenheim to got ahead of me alretty—aind it? No, sir-ee!"

And, with sundry nods and smiles of satisfaction at having a second time outwitted his competitor, he re-entered the store.

When Schwartz called at the Kauffman dwelling that evening, he was put in possession of a sum sufficient to take him, if not to California, at least to a point in the West from which he would have little difficulty in working his way to the desired El Dorado.

The day for departure came. Lena and the children found a cordial welcome at Mrs. Franzman's. Arrayed in Bergthal's shop-worn suit, his money securely strapped in a belt around his waist, and accompanied by Messrs. Kauffman, Rosenheim, Ehrlich, Bergthal, Blumen and other prominent Israelites to the limits of the town, Isaac Schwartz departed, with a dozen other venture-some men, to the wild and unknown West.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE CRIME.

"O, cursed lust of gold! when for thy sake  
The fool throws up his interest in both worlds;  
First starved in this, then damned in that to come."—*Blair.*

LIFE in the gold diggings was not exactly what Schwartz had pictured it. His star was not yet in the ascendant, and the Shlemiel remained a luckless wight abroad, as he had been at home. After innumerable privations and hardships, the little band of pioneers reached St. Joseph four weeks after setting out. Isaac's money was by this time exhausted, and he lacked the means to continue his journey to the coast. By doing sundry jobs about town, however, he endeavored to earn enough to carry him onward. He remained here for a month, at the end of which time he joined another party of gold seekers, bound for the far-off El Dorado. It was after reaching the gold fields that the real hardships began, and the next few months of our friend's life were the unhappiest he had ever known. His physical debility, his extreme sensitiveness, his obtrusive piety, his Jewish characteristics, united to make his lot particularly miserable. He had Anglicized his name to Ike Black, but his rough and unsympathetic companions had, early in their association, dubbed him "Sheeny Ike," and the poor fellow, too frail

and too ingenuous to resent their pleasantries, became the butt of their uncouth jokes.

His adherence to the quaint rites of his religion, which he insisted on following in spite of all obstacles, did much to excite their grim humor. They would hurl their unseemly jests at him when he was employed in his matutinal devotions; would steal away his little Hebrew prayer-book—a cherished gift from his old father—and delighted in forcing pieces of forbidden pork between his teeth. Isaac bore it meekly; it would have been folly to rebel; but the tears of mortification flooded his eyes when he was alone, and it was only the thought of his wife and little ones, and the recollection of the poverty which had been his share at home, that fanned the faint spark of hope and courage within him.

He sought solace in hard work. There was sufficient of that on hand. The neighborhood in which the men had encamped seemed a promising one at first, and they decided to make themselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted. Trees were cleared away, rude log cabins were hastily constructed, and a road was formed over the hills to the little village, six miles distant. All this required earnest labor, and Isaac, in spite of his ailments and the difficulties which were constantly thrown in his way, contributed his full share.

Marvelously picturesque was the spot in which these rough, isolated men had settled—a spot since become famous through the advertisements of a trans-continental railway, but then almost inaccessible to Caucasian explorers. It lay in a dent of the Sierras, amidst the most luxuriant savagery. High up, on either hand,

rose huge, conical masses of turreted and rock-bound hills—giant pyramids set by nature as sentinels to guard the treasures concealed in the valley between. Range after range stretched in perspective towards the north and south, until, from sombre, weather-beaten crags, they seemed to change into mounds of bluish mystery. A mountain torrent roared between, shaking its sides with pent-up rage, foaming with eager impatience as it dashed on over glittering rocks, over auriferous sand, losing itself finally in the darkness of a primeval forest of gigantic redwood trees, which stretched in an unbroken wall along the west. No bright patches of cultivated fields, no evidences of man's dominion were there, but everywhere wild, untamed, mysterious nature; rocks and crags, cascades and torrents, river and forest, grandeur and majesty. Schwartz's love for the beautiful in nature was strongly developed. He detected a charm in the most ordinary view or trivial phenomenon, a picture in a tree or a sunset. To him the rugged scenery would have brought untold delight, had it not been coupled with such mental suffering, such intolerable humiliation. Before many weeks this majestic spot filled him with loathing and disgust.

There was one man in the gang with which Schwartz had, through force of circumstances, associated himself who wielded a sinister influence over him. This was Dick Sweeny, a burly desperado. The entire company stood in awe of Sweeny, who exercised his self-instituted authority with no gentle hand. Sweeny was a coarse, red-headed fellow, of uncouth speech and brutal



aspect. He had joined the party on the road from St. Joseph, and, from his casual knowledge of the territory, made himself useful to the little band of pioneers. Of his past nothing definite was known, except what he himself would reveal during his drunken spells. Then he would relate, with thrilling braggadocio, how he had been under sentence for murdering a man in St. Louis; how he had broken jail, escaped from his pursuers, and come out West to seek his fortune. This fellow, although tyrannical, was harmless enough when sober; but when intoxicated he became a fiend, hesitating at no crime, and capable of any excess. He was drunk often enough to become a terror to the camp. Towards Isaac his attitude was peculiar. When sober, he took the poor Hebrew under his protection against the other members of the party.

"If any of you dog-goned fellows hurts a hair of Sheeny Ike's head, I'll shoot him quicker'n he can say Jack Robinson!" he would declare, when Isaac appealed to him for help.

When intoxicated, however, his sympathies underwent a mysterious change. Then he would antagonize our friend as thoroughly as he had patronized him before. He devised and perpetrated the most heartless annoyances upon his unoffending victim.

On one occasion he came drunk into Isaac's cabin, just as the latter was winding his phylacteries preparatory to saying his prayers. Sweeny tore the phylacteries from the trembling man's hands, and, throwing him to the floor, bound his arms together with the leather thongs and fastened him to a post in the wall.

"Now, Jew," he cried, in his heavy speech, "see whether Jehovah will help you get loose!"

Then he ran out into the camp and brought back a half-dozen of his comrades to witness Ike's plight, and to laugh and jeer at his piteous appeals for help.

It was a rough life, a rough company, a rough experience for Isaac; but he bore it unflinchingly. If he could only find gold! He could not go back to Lena without the wealth he had promised her.

The search for gold was very disappointing. In spite of Sweeny's assertions that they were right in the midst of the most prolific fields, the yellow metal failed to materialize in paying quantity. They were anxious days for the entire gang. At times a miner would strike a rich pocket, and the excitement rose to fever heat; but then weeks would elapse without another find of value. There was always a small quantity of gold-dust to be obtained by washing the sand from the river. This, while it did not enrich anybody, and scarcely repaid the labor bestowed upon it, served to keep the men in the locality, and their explorations did not extend far from where they had originally pitched their camp. Our friend found little to console him in his harsh surroundings. The hovel on Oak Street, wretched though it was, bore at least the semblance of a home, and was hallowed by the presence of a wife and children. Here all was desolation and disappointment. He could not escape the conviction that he was still a Shlemiel. The religious teaching, that God does all things for the best, was not convincing to his impatient soul. The fortitude, courage and industry he displayed

had not as yet led to any tangible results. Exposed to the ribald sport of the miners, deprived of the society of kindred spirits, distrusting his ability, his luck, his very self, his was an unfortunate experience, and often, as he strolled silently along the rugged banks of the swift-flowing river, vague thoughts of suicide formed in his brain.

After the lapse of several months his position became more bearable. The uncouth miners discovered in the meek Jew an understanding, an intellect superior to their own. His peculiarities and foreign mannerisms were in a measure forgotten, and, seated around the fire on a dull evening, they would listen by the hour to his stories about Germany, or hear him relate anecdotes from the Talmud, a book of which not one of them had ever heard before.

"Ike is not such a fool as he looks," one would say, shaking his head and winking at his comrades. "He knows a dern sight more than any of us."

"Them stories of his'n about the Tallmood sound kinder like our stories in the Testament, with Jesus left out," said another. "What's your belief, anyhow, Ike?"

Then Isaac, not sorry to vent his knowledge, expounded the beauties of his monotheistic belief to his own satisfaction, if not to that of his hearers.

"Well, pard," cried one of the rough fellows, shaking Ike by the hand, "if them 'ere are your beliefs, you can't be a very bad man. No one with them sentiments could go very far wrong."

These discussions on religion, which became of fre-

quent occurrence, had a perceptible influence upon the miners, and while they still vented their rough humor upon the Jew, they treated him with greater consideration than before.

Often, as they whiled away the long winter evenings, they spoke of their relatives at home—of their mothers, wives and sisters; for each of these reckless men had left a portion of his heart in the distant Orient. At such times Isaac would not say a word, but the tears forced themselves through his lashes, and he sent up a silent prayer for the welfare of his beloved ones. On one such occasion a digger went over to Ike and shook him roughly out of his revery.

“Say, Sheeny Ike, ain’t you got no relations in the East?” he asked.

“Yes; a wife and two babies.”

“Well, why the deuce don’t you tell us about them?”

Isaac hesitated awhile before dragging the names of his dear ones into the conversation; but there was no escape, and in his quaint way he told them the simple story of his life—of his sufferings, of his emigration to this country to avoid persecution. He followed up this narrative with such an eulogy upon his wife’s virtues that the entire company was moved to tears.

“Gol-darn it, Ike, you’ve had a hard time of it, now, for a fact. You deserve a better fate,” was the opinion of one of the listeners; and the others echoed it.

So the Jew gradually found his way into the affections of his associates, and before he had been three months in their society their jeers and gibes had given way to something like respect, and Sheeny Ike was

allowed to follow his own ideas in matters of diet and religion.

Sweeny usually kept away from these evening gatherings. He preferred roaming over the hills or riding over to rival camps, where he could better indulge his appetite for liquor. He had no time to waste on religious conversations. All the spirituality he had ever possessed had been imbibed from the whisky bottle. Conversations about wife and children had no attraction for him, either. Rumor had it that he had deserted his wife, years ago, for a disreputable person, and that the murder for which he had been imprisoned was indirectly caused by this desertion. Sweeny still continued a desperate character in camp. The gang stood in terror of him, and, knowing his fierce vindictiveness, were careful not to antagonize him unnecessarily. Ike had grown accustomed to him, and, while he trembled before his fierce glance, he feared him less than formerly.

Winter passed drearily enough. With the advent of spring, hope revived; but spring ripened into summer, and still the gold—the ardently desired gold—remained undiscovered. The company divided into sections and explored the country in different directions. Sweeny was loud in his assertions that he could lay his hand upon unlimited wealth, and his assurance had the effect of keeping a number of men about him; but his magnificent promises were never realized. Finally, early in the month of July, it was decided to abandon the camp altogether and seek for the precious metal farther north.



"Look here, Ike," whispered Sweeny to him, one evening; "I want to talk to you. Come out to the ravine, where the fellers can't hear us."

With a secret apprehension of coming mischief, Isaac accompanied his dreaded guide to the designated place.

"You needn't pack up your duds, Ike," said the bully, when they were beyond ear-shot. "You're not going to travel with them fellers."

"Yes, I am, Dick," returned Isaac, timidly. "I'm tired of working for nothing."

"You're not going with the boys, I say; and you know me. When I say a thing I mean it."

Isaac cowered before Sweeny's threatening eyes. He feared to reply.

"You're out here to get rich, ain't you?"

"Yes, that's just it," he replied. "We've been out here for seven months, and haven't struck it yet. I'm anxious to get back to my wife, and want to find something to take along with me."

"Egs-actly," said Sweeny, with provoking slowness; "and that's why I'm talking to you. See here; I've taken a fancy to you from the first, and want to help you. Them fellers are a-goin' to a place that's worked to death, while this place right here is richer than any of them."

"It don't seem so to me," answered Ike, impatiently.

"It don't, eh? Well, look at this. What do you say now?"

Sweeny put his hand into the pocket of his ragged, mud-stained trousers, and brought out a nugget of shining gold. How it glistened in the moonlight! It

dazzled Schwartz's eyes, and he took it in his hand and mentally calculated its weight.

"Great heavens!" he ejaculated, scarcely crediting his senses; "that must be worth a hundred dollars."

"Yes, twice that," said Dick, carefully putting the treasure back into his pocket.

"Where did you get it, Dick?"

"In a fissure, right across the creek. There's lots more where that came from. I knew of it months ago, but I did not want the gang to get on to it. Now listen to me. Let them fellers go to the devil, if they like! They haven't got no love for me, and I haven't got none for them. Me and you will stay right here, and go halves in these diggin's. Do you understand?"

"You mean that I am to remain here with you, and share the gold?"

"That's it, my boy. What a comprehension for a Sheeny! You are not particularly strong, and hard work don't agree with you. Consequently we'll arrange for you to stay to home, and do the cooking and such work about the mansion"—and he jerked his thumb towards the rickety log cabin—"while I work the diggin's. You can carry out your blamed Jewish ideas to your heart's content; cook your milk and your meat together, or separate, and go through all the jugglery you like, to get it the way holy Moses commanded it. I'll not interfere. All I want is three square meals a day, while I go out and scoop in the yellow."

"And are we to share alike?" eagerly asked Isaac, whose desire for wealth began to outweigh the dislike he bore Sweeny.

"Ain't that what I said? And did you ever know Dick Sweeny to go back on his word? At the end of three months we will divide, and you can go home to your wife worth half a million."

Isaac's head began to swim. His mind's eye spanned the three months like a flash, and beheld the rapturous reunion with wife and children. It was too good to be true. Suddenly he thought of his comrades.

"Why don't you tell the gang about your find?" he asked. "There is certainly enough for all."

"Gol-darn your Hebrew soul!" cried Sweeny, alarmed at the idea; "if you open your mouth about it, I'll fill you so full of holes that your wife can use you for an ash-sieve!"

And the bully flourished his revolver, as an earnest of his threat.

"For God's sake, Dick, put it away! I'll not say a word."

Sweeny put his weapon back into his pocket.

"There are several reasons why I want you," he said, sullenly. "I might have picked out one of the gang who is strong enough to help me dig; but I don't trust none of them. After I had collected a couple of thousand, they'd run off with it and leave me in the hole. Now, I trust you. With all your heathenish notions about the Talmutt, or whatever you call it, and about your not believing in the Holy Ghost and the blessed Virgin, I believe you're honest. I need some one to look after me when I'm drunk, and you've got more patience than all the rest of the fellers put together. Now, Ike Black, we're going to be million-

aires, and you ought to be proud at being elected to fill the office."

Isaac's enthusiasm had somewhat subsided while Sweeny spoke. He muttered something about hoping that the thing would turn out well; and while Sweeny depicted, in glowing colors and ungrammatical English, the brilliant prospects of untold wealth, they returned to the camp.

Isaac slept little that night. He did not relish being the sole companion of an irresponsible brute like Sweeny. He had had enough opportunities of becoming acquainted with his terrible anger and senseless passion. On the other hand, it would have been dangerous for him to refuse, after becoming the custodian of the man's secret. Moreover, the desire for wealth was growing with him. As the days rolled by, he yearned to be reunited with his Lena. Here was the long-sought opportunity to achieve success. The night was spent in sleepless indecision; but when morning dawned his resolution was firmly taken—he would remain with Dick, for better or for worse. That Sweeny meant treachery; that he had other motives for keeping the Jew with him, never entered Isaac's unsuspecting head.

On the following day the gang separated, Sweeny and Schwartz alone remaining behind.

For some time these diametrically opposite characters got along very well together. Sweeny tried to keep sober, and worked with a vim. When he came home at night, Isaac would ask:

"Well, Dick, what luck?"

And Dick would display a little canvas bag, filled with gold-dust, and occasionally a good-sized nugget.

"How's that, Ike?"

"Immense! Our little pile is growing. We will soon be rich."

"What did I tell you? In three months we will divide, and Ike Black—Sheeny Ike—will be a millionaire."

The gold was placed in a larger sack, which was carefully hidden in a cave near the house. This was in turn closed by a boulder, and the treasure was safe from prying intruders. Isaac's duties were not very arduous. He attended to the home labors. There was a village some six miles away, and to this Isaac walked daily in search of provisions. When his labors in the cabin were accomplished, he would go down to the gorge to help Dick. Thanks to the invigorating climate, he was becoming robust and quite handy with the tools, and whenever he struck a nugget, however small, his joy at having added to the common treasure was almost infantile. At washing for gold, too, he was becoming an expert, and, on the whole, contributed as much to the common welfare as did his blustering and swearing partner.

He was, as we know, of a morbidly religious nature, and could now give his piety full sway. Whatever was placed on his table was prepared as nearly as possible according to Talmudic regulations. Meat and milk were kept religiously apart. He applied his phylacteries and said his prayers with unfailing regularity. He had even nailed to the door-posts of his log cabin a



little "Messussa," which he had brought from home, and without which no Jewish dwelling is complete. He was as orthodox in all his ceremonies as was possible under the peculiar circumstances, and in the midst of a wilderness, with a Gentile outcast for a companion, Isaac established an orthodox household. He kept the Jewish Sabbath, doing only the most necessary work, and Sweeny, to humor his partner, forbore to labor on that day, and worked on Sunday instead. In spite of the anomaly of his position, therefore, Isaac was comparatively cheerful. He had the consolation of knowing that he was laying in a store of wealth for his family.

This condition of affairs lasted about two months. Then came a terrible reaction. Sweeny, who had, for reasons best known to himself, remained tolerably sober, came home one day in a state of beastly intoxication. There was a wicked gleam in his gray eyes, as he staggered into the room.

"Here, you Christ-killer!" he shouted to Isaac. "Take off my boots, and be quick about it."

Isaac shook with fright.

"Why, what's the matter, Dick?" he stammered. "Are you sick?"

"Sick, nothing! Never felt better in my life. But I'm d—— tired of doing all the hard work and having you sit around at home and taking it easy. Do you hear me? I'm tired of it."

"Well, Dick," answered Isaac, pacifically, "it was your own suggestion. I do all I can. I'm willing to go out and help you with your work. Just say the word."

Ike's meekness had an irritating effect upon the besotted miner.

"All you're good for is to stay at home and say your prayers," he cried, with an accompaniment of select oaths. "I'm tired of your d—— religion. It brings me bad luck. Here's another of your mummeries," he cried, striding to the door and tearing down the "Messussa." "I don't want my house hoodooed by any of your blanked nonsense!" And Sweeny threw the obnoxious thing into the fire.

Isaac, trembling in every limb, moved to the door.

"I'll be back again when you are more reasonable, Dick," he said.

"Dern your soul!" cried Sweeny, enraged at the possible escape of his victim, "you don't move a step without my permission." And pulling out his revolver, he sent a ball whizzing past Isaac's ear. Had he been less intoxicated, the bullet would have hit the mark, and Isaac's existence have come to an untimely end.

"All right, Dick," cried the poor fellow, a prey to terror. "Put up your revolver. I was only in fun. I'll stay with you."

"You'd better, if you know what's good for you."

For a while Sweeny sulked about the cabin, venting his spleen upon the furniture and utensils, which he kicked unceremoniously about the room. Then he went for poor Ike again. The Jew's religion was a special annoyance to this brute during his drunken moments, and he became vehement in his denunciation of Christ-killers in general, and of this one in particular. Isaac nervously went on with his work, without replying. He

feared to say a word which might prove his undoing. This stoical silence angered Sweeny more and more, and he fumed in uncontrollable rage. Suddenly his frenzy took a different turn.

"How do I know," he muttered, "that you will not rob me some night while I'm asleep, and go off with the gold?"

"You know I wouldn't do it, Dick," stammered Schwartz.

"I don't know anything of the kind. I don't trust you. I don't trust no Jew. Darn it, if I thought you'd take the gold, I'd blow daylight through you!"

Dick made a significant move towards his hip pocket.

"Don't shoot, Dick," cried the terrified man. "I wouldn't do anything dishonest." And he cowered in a corner of the cabin, watching the other's every move like a sparrow fascinated by a serpent.

Sweeny strode up and down the room for a while, muttering to himself.

"I guess I'll secure you, anyway," he said, with an oath. "It will be safer." Taking a long lariat from the wall, he threw it over Ike's head, and before the latter could realize what had happened, he found himself upon the floor, with the brute kneeling over him. With a few turns of the rope, Sweeny tied the poor fellow's arms and legs together, so that motion was almost impossible.

"Now, I guess you're safe," he said; and, bestowing a parting kick upon the helpless body, he left the cabin, and repaired to the village for more liquor.

Isaac listened to the retreating footsteps with fast-

beating heart. By twisting and turning, he gradually managed to loosen the poorly-tied bonds and rose to his feet. He was considerably bruised, however, and could stand only with difficulty. His first care was to burn the lariat, to prevent a repetition of the outrage. Then a thousand plans as to his future conduct coursed through his mind. Should he remain with this fellow at the risk of losing his life, or return to his wife as poor as he had gone away? Rather return home a beggar, than purchase wealth at such a price. But, alas! he could not go. He feared Sweeny's influence, even at a distance, and knew how hopeless was the prospect of flight.

Sweeny's spree became uncomfortably frequent, but Isaac usually saw the premonitory symptoms, and would on such occasions make a surreptitious trip to the village, and remain in seclusion until Dick had sobered up. It was when he was drunk that Isaac had just cause to fear him.

Whatever feelings poor Schwartz may have originally harbored toward Sweeny, but one sentiment remained, and that was intense hatred. There is no hatred comparable to that rooted in fear and nourished by a sense of isolation and helplessness. Doomed to silence by the loneliness of his position, his broodings encouraged vindictiveness, and often vague thoughts of freeing himself from his mortal enemy shot through his brain. His mingled rage and hatred found vent in strange schemes of vengeance, and these ideas filled him with terror at himself, even while they promised him escape from slavery. At times he hoped that Providence might come to the rescue. What if Sweeny were found

drowned in the river? What if, on returning from the village in a drunken state, he stumbled and met death over a precipice. He longed ardently for some such lucky accident to rid him of his curse. His brain gradually became so busy with this one absorbing idea, that he began to fear for his own sanity. How easy it would have been to kill Sweeny as he lay in a sodden stupor, and not a soul would be the wiser! Such a suggestion had presented itself at times insidiously and treacherously to Isaac's mind, but he repelled it with horror. No, thank God, he was no murderer! A Jew abhors the thought of shedding blood, and Isaac could not have willfully hurt a dumb brute. Side by side with the phantom of Sweeny's cruelty stalked a still more hideous phantom—fear of himself; and he beheld them, these grim spectres, with terror-stricken brain, and tried to exorcise them with what little religion and philosophy he could still command. Prayer by day and by night was his most effective weapon—prayer that he might be relieved from his tormentor's presence, prayer that he might be relieved from the danger of doing evil.

And then when his desperation hinted at a possible violence to Sweeny, he would invoke the features of his wife, he would endeavor to picture her horror at any wickedness he might commit; and, trembling like a leaf at the very thought of incurring her scorn, he would relapse into a state of quiescent suffering, and leave his fate in the hands of God.

They were cruel days of fierce temptation, of titanic struggle, of heroic restraint.

One night Ike heard his partner rise from his cot, and



after carefully assuring himself that the Jew had his eyes closed, he took a lantern and his pick and spade, and left the cabin. Isaac did not dare to move, but wondering what this new manœuvre might signify, he lay quietly under the covers and listened. He could hear Sweeny dig in the clump of trees near the cabin. A strange thought shot through the poor fellow's mind. Was Sweeny digging a grave in which to bury him? He trembled with fear. There was nothing to do, however, but to remain quiet and await developments. Sweeny worked for an hour before he returned. After satisfying himself that Isaac was still asleep, he muttered something, and, throwing himself upon his bed, was soon snoring. His hapless comrade slept little that night, but with all his heart wished himself at home in the East. In the morning Isaac found a deep hole dug near the hut, carefully hidden by twigs and earth.

During all his vicissitudes, the Jew kept a correct reckoning of time. September had come, and with it the Jewish New Year, which he observed religiously in the seclusion of his cabin. The little Hebrew prayer book was brought into requisition, and Isaac's thoughts were divided between God in heaven and his beloved ones at home. Then came the Day of Atonement, the greatest of all Jewish holidays. This, too, would have been duly observed but for a serious incident; Sweeny came home drunk, offensively drunk.

It was Yom Kippur eve. Isaac had eaten his supper in solitude, for his partner had not yet put in an appearance. The primitive tin dishes had been washed and put away, the tallow candles lit, and Isaac had made

peace with the world. He had adorned his shoulders with a snow white praying scarf with a black border and with long fringes (Tallith), one of his father's gifts. With covered head and with a contrite heart, he stood facing the East, engaged in earnest prayer. His eyes swam at the thought of the wretchedness of his situation, of his complete isolation from the world. He thought of his brethren, his co-religionists in their various synagogues, praying to Jehovah for atonement. He, too, had much to pray for, many a boon to ask of his Heavenly Father, and he prayed long and fervently.

The prayer, most earnestly offered, was one of devout thankfulness that he had preserved his innocence, and, in spite of temptation and provocation, had not stained his hands with crime.

Suddenly the door opened, and Sweeny appeared upon the threshold, staggering under a load of "tanglefoot." He carried his pick with him, and stood it upright against the table.

"Hullo, what's this?" he shouted, in his maudlin voice, as he caught sight of the Jew, picturesquely arrayed in his Tallith. "A masquerade?"

Isaac did not reply.

"Saying prayers again, eh? Some more of your d—— religion. Take that rag off. I've got enough of this nonsense." Pulling the scarf from Ike's shoulders, he vented his anger upon it by tearing it into strips.

"There, that will make a fine lot of bandages," he cried, with a hoarse laugh.

Isaac's blood surged wildly through his veins at this

new indignity, but discretion taught him to keep his mouth closed.

"Now get me my supper, you confounded heaven-stormer."

"I won't, Dick! This is the Day of Atonement. I'll do no work."

"You won't, eh? Day of Atonement, is it? I don't care if it's the Day of Resurrection. I want my supper. You think I ought to do all the digging and hard work, while you stay at home and say your prayers. I suppose you'll want some of my gold next."

"That's it exactly," cried Isaac, goaded to desperation. "Dick Sweeny, our three months are up. I'm tired of being your slave. I've stood it as long as I could, but my patience has given out. Give me my half of the gold, and let me go home to my wife."

An unexpected change came over the drunkard. His eyes bleared fiendishly, and his fingers twitched as though he contemplated taking Isaac by the throat.

"Give you your half of the gold," he repeated. "Ha, ha! I'll see you in hell first!"

He strode over to Isaac and seized him by the wrist.

"So you thought you were to have half the gold for the little cooking you did, you groveling idiot! I kept you with me because you were too big a fool to be dangerous. When I have no more use for you, you can go to the devil, if you like. But the gold is mine. Do you hear me? If you lay your fingers on it, I'll let daylight through your Jewish carcass!"

The drunken brute had given Isaac a glimpse of his true purpose; his perfidy was apparent. For a moment

the poor fellow stood speechless with surprise and mortification. His dream of wealth was at an end. For months he had toiled and slaved for this tyrant, and submitted to his insults, buoyed up solely by the hope of becoming rich, and now he saw his hope destroyed, his life irretrievably wasted.

As he gazed into the besotted face of the miner, who still held him firmly by the wrist, rage and despair supplanted the meekness which had so long characterized him. He was conscious of but one thought—namely, that he stood face to face with a mortal enemy.

“You devil!” he hissed, trying to break loose from the fellow’s grasp. “You false, lying, deceitful devil!”

All his passion seemed to go out in his speech. Sweeny put his hand to his pistol.

“Say that again, you miserable dog, and I’ll—”

But he did not finish his sentence. Mad with fear and rage, Isaac had seized the pick and swung it with all the force of despair at Sweeny’s head. The aim was true, and, with a stifled curse, the miner fell to the floor. A stream of blood issued from a gash in his temple where the pick had struck.

Isaac gazed at the fallen man in a stupid way, without at first realizing what he had done. His anger had vented itself in that one blow, and a moment later he felt remorse at his hasty and unpremeditated deed.

“Dick,” he cried, sinking on his knees beside the bleeding man, “I didn’t mean to hurt you. Come, get up, and say you’ll forgive me.”

Sweeny did not move, but lay stiff and inert upon the ground.

“Good God, he is dead!” shrieked Isaac, tearing open his victim’s shirt and feeling for his heart. “I have killed him! I am his murderer! My God, what will become of me?”

For awhile he knelt by the side of the unconscious clay, too dazed for rational thought. Then he sprang to his feet, with a cry of despair.

“They will hang me for his murder!” he groaned. “Oh, what have I done? I didn’t mean to kill him—God knows I didn’t mean to do that! Lena!” he cried, in despair—“what will become of Lena and the children if I am hung as a murderer?”

The thought drove him to frenzy.

“I did it in self-defence,” he murmured; “but no one would believe me. They daren’t find me here; I shall run away before they come. But the gold! I’ll take that with me; I worked faithfully for it. I shall have my pay for the time I served this man.”

With a shuddering look at the body, Isaac hurried out into the dark night and went straight to the cave in which the treasure had been concealed. With feverish excitement he tugged at the heavy stone and pulled it from its place. He put his hand into the opening. Good heavens! the sack of gold had disappeared—the cave was empty! There was now no doubt left of Sweeny’s treachery. He had surreptitiously removed the gold, for fear that Isaac might make off with it.

“Curse him—curse him!” muttered Isaac, as hot tears coursed down his cheeks.

Suddenly he remembered that Sweeny had dug the pit behind the cabin. Perhaps he had formed a new



hiding-place for the treasure. Isaac hastily retraced his steps, and groped his way to the clump of trees behind the house. He sought for the spot in which the sack might have been concealed, but it was dark and he could see nothing. He would have to go back to the cabin and get a lantern. He opened the door slowly, in superstitious awe, and shuddered as his eyes fell upon the corpse. The blood was still trickling down the stony face. It was a fearful aspect. Isaac felt faint at the sight of it. Instinctively he thought of staunching the wound. Ha, the praying scarf! He seized one of the strips from the floor, and taking Dick's head upon his lap, he bound it tightly about the bleeding forehead. Sweeny was right; the Tal-lith made an excellent bandage. Then he left the head sink slowly to the floor, mechanically lit the lantern, and slunk out in a stupor of fear and remorse.

His search was rewarded, after a few moments, by finding the spot. There was a freshly-made elevation, with loose earth around it. It looked like a new grave. It must be here that Sweeny had buried the treasure. Isaac tore at the earth with his fingers. Down, further down, he burrowed with the energy of a madman. At last he grasped something yielding; it was the sack. He tugged at it with both hands with remarkable strength until he had torn it from its concealment. He opened the bag feverishly. Perhaps he was mistaken, after all. No, it was the gold—the treasure was safe.

"I have it!" he cried, wiping his perspiring face on his sleeve. "Lena and the children will be wealthy.

I'll be a Shlemiel no longer. But oh, my God, what a price I have paid for it!"

He swung the sack upon his shoulder. It was uncomfortably heavy, but Isaac seemed to have acquired herculean strength. Now he would flee—flee to a place of safety—to his home. He staggered down the road toward the village with his precious burden. No, he could not go thus. He must return to the cabin for his trinkets.

Dropping his sack in the narrow road, he crept, rather than walked, back to the hut. He hesitated with fear before entering; then, with an effort, opened the door.

There lay the stiffening body, with the dim light of the candle casting its rays across the ghastly features. It seemed as though the body had changed its position. Isaac crawled along, holding to the chair, to the table, to the wall for support. He could not tear his horrified gaze from the corpse; he trembled in every limb. Pulling himself together with an effort, he went to his little chest in the corner. There was not much he wanted—only his phylacteries and his prayer book, the companions of his happier days. All the rest might remain with the corpse. Isaac crept back to the door. Once it appeared as though the body moved slightly. Isaac stood with bated breath and haggard face. It must have been a delusion; the man apparently lay still in death. The walls, the furniture, the corpse seemed to cry out, "Assassin! assassin!"

Isaac could bear it no longer. Putting his relics into his pocket, he went out of the cabin into the dark and friendly night.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RETURN.

“Where is the one who hath not had  
Some anguish-trial, long gone by,  
Steal, spectre-like, all dark and sad,  
On busy thought?—*Cook.*”

MRS. FRANZMAN, widow, was sole proprietor of a notions, dry goods and millinery store on Cedar Street. An enterprising, thrifty little woman was Mrs. Franzman, with an undeniable talent for business and for making friends. When Mr. Franzman died, he left a little shop, heavily burdened with debts. He left, moreover, three small children, whose cries for bread could not be stifled, and Mrs. Franzman saw herself obliged to continue the business which her defunct husband had started, but which had been a losing speculation from the first.

With remarkable energy she had applied herself to her task, and succeeded, at the end of a few years, in removing every vestige of debt and of placing her establishment upon a paying basis. It was now the best patronized shop on the street, the rendezvous of all the Jewish women in the city, and of many Christians as well, who bought her bonnets because they were stylish and of moderate price, and because Mrs. Franzman had the happy faculty of pleasing them in every

particular. One touch of the milliner's fingers makes all womankind kin. The place was the neatest one could imagine. The floor and the counters, the shelves and the show windows, were as clean as indefatigable scrubbing, scouring and painting could make them. The little room behind the shop contained three pretty milliner girls, all dressed in neat white aprons. They were as cheerful as the gaudy bonnets which were being trimmed by their nimble fingers. Mrs. Franzman was a woman in a thousand, and it is a pleasure for her biographer to chronicle her excellent qualities.

In appearance Mrs. Franzman was an impressive woman, who had no doubt been considered handsome in her youth. Her figure was still slim and graceful; her face, with its black hair and dark eyes, was somewhat emaciated from her ceaseless and energetic toil; but a look of ineffable kindness pervaded her features, just as goodness pervaded all her acts. She and her husband had migrated from Hanover ten years before. They had enjoyed a good education, and had quickly adopted American speech and manners.

It was at the house of this estimable lady that Lena had found a home; and such a home! She never neglected to thank God in her prayers for having led her to so friendly a refuge. Lena proudly occupied the position of cook, of nurse, of housekeeper, of companion. She early evinced her worthiness of her protector's confidence, and if she was grateful for the favors shown her, Mrs. Franzman was no less thankful for having secured a helper on whom she could implicitly rely, and who would relieve her of the cares of her house and

children, while she devoted her entire time to the constantly growing business.

The little Franzmans, the oldest of whom was a boy of ten, loved Aunt Lena, as they called her, and she understood perfectly the art of winning their young hearts.

We will intrude upon the privacy of their happy home, and visit them this quiet October evening. The children had just been put to bed—Davie, Ray and Henry in one room, and Josie and Rose in an adjoining apartment, in which stood Lena's bed. Joe had grown immensely since we saw him last. His cheeks were chubbier, and there was in his face an undeniable resemblance to his father. Little Rose, too, had become quite a lady; she had cut all her teeth, could toddle about gracefully, and could speak with astonishing distinctness.

"Say your prayers, Josie, dear," said his mother.

Joe folded his hands and repeated his evening prayer. Its conclusion was, as it had been daily for a year, "Oh, God, bring back papa soon again! Amen."

And his mother's eyes, as usual, filled with tears as her heart echoed the request. Then Lena kissed the little ones, tucked them under the warm quilts, and went down to Mrs. Franzman in the shop.

Mr. Rosenheim, who had just closed up his store and was on his way home, stopped in for a moment to pass the time of day. He frequently called to see how Lena was getting on; for, since his munificent contribution to Schwartz's traveling fund, he considered himself in some degree obligated to see after the wife's welfare.



"My vife expects you and Mrs. Schwartz to de house Monday evening, to play klopfen (a game of cards)," he said to Mrs. Franzman.

"Thank you," said that lady; "we will be glad to come."

"Vell, Mrs. Schwartz, vot do you hear from your hoosband?" he asked, with a visible effort to cheer her up. "I guess dot man has only two objects in life—one is to get rich, and de oder is to get richer."

"I haven't heard from him for some time," replied Lena, wistfully; "but I hope he is well and happy."

"Yes, yes; he is happy if he finds lots of gold. I tell you vot it is. Happiness is not having all you vant, but in being able to get more. Ven a man has so mooch money dot he don't know how to spend it all, dot kind of ignorance is bliss. Vot does de Talmud say? '*Kol devorim thum.*' Vell, vot's de difference vot de Talmud says? It means, 'Dere may be some t'ings dot are better dan money; but it takes money to buy dem.' Vell, I hope he vill soon come home for your sake. I vill be one of de first to shake his hand and say 'Massel-tof.' Good night. Cheer up! I must go home now; my vife is vaiting. Now, be sure and come on Monday evening."

And Mr. Rosenheim, with sundry nods and winks indicative of good will, left the ladies to their work.

The widow was busy at this particular season. Her bonnets were in great demand, and her little force of milliners were often kept at their work till late at night. She dismissed her tired helpers and sat down with Lena to finish an important order.

"Do you know, Lena," said Mrs. Franzman, holding up a bonnet upon which she was bestowing the finishing touches, and examining it critically from all sides, "do you know that I am tired of my business, and think seriously of retiring."

"Why, Pauline, you cannot be in earnest! Give up this business, which is more prosperous than ever it was!"

"That is just the difficulty—it is too prosperous. I have neither the energy nor the physical force necessary to conduct it. I go to bed harassed by business cares, and I arise with them in the morning. I have too much upon my shoulders—as much as most men could bear. And my children; why, I have hardly spoken to them for three days. If it were not for the Sabbath, I would scarcely get time to speak to them at all."

"That is certainly unfortunate," Lena assented.

"I don't know what I should do without you, my dear," continued Mrs. Franzman. "You have been a second mother to them, and I know they love you almost as much as they do me."

"And I love them. Both you and they are very dear to me. Oh, Pauline, what would have become of me without your aid?"

"Something else would have presented itself. God does not desert his children."

Both women were working while they conversed.

"But the store," exclaimed Lena, after a pause. "You surely do not mean to dispose of that?"

"Yes, if I can find a good purchaser for it. It is well established, and should bring a fair price. I could

then live comfortably on my savings, bring up my children as good Israelites, and make up for them in love the neglect of the last few years. Ah, if my husband were still alive, how proud he would be of this business which he founded, but whose success he did not live to see !”

Lena sighed, from the bottom of her heart.

“Apropos, have you had no news from your husband ?” asked Mrs. Franzman, who divined the meaning of that sigh.

“None whatever. It is three months since I last heard from him. At that time he was very despondent. Something unfortunate must have happened to him. Oh, Pauline, I cannot tell you how heavy my heart is ! I know I shall appear ungrateful. I have a good home, but I would prefer poverty, even starvation, at his side, to riches and luxury without him.”

Pauline took up a bonnet and held it to the light. The movement effectually concealed a tear which dimmed her eye.

“Perhaps he is on his way home.”

“I wish I could think so. It is not likely, however, for he would have prepared me.”

“You should not despair, my dear ; he will come back in good time.”

There was a pause, during which the willing fingers flew over their work, while active brains were busy with troublesome reflections. Lena’s thoughts resembled the circlets of waves in a pond, set into motion by a stone thrown into the glassy waters. The impulse which stirred these wavelets was the ever-recurring

figure of her husband, and doubt, fear, uneasiness followed each other through ever varying circles and degrees of intensity. She was very unhappy, and scalding tears blinded her eyes, and falling, almost ruined the delicate ribbon on which she was working.

Hark ! A ring at the door-bell ; perhaps a belated customer. Lena ran to open the door, and stood for a moment confronting a man in the passage.

“Lena ! Lena—dear Lena ! don’t you know me ?”

“Isaac, my husband !” Lena fairly shrieked, in her glad surprise ; and the lovers lay in each other’s arms, oblivious to all but their long-delayed happiness.

Pauline had run out at the noise, and stood a silent witness of the ecstatic scene. Tears ran unhindered down her cheeks—tears of joy and sympathy.

“Ah,” she sighed, fervently, “if my husband could but come back, too !”

Never was there such a reunion. A thousand times they told each other of their happiness and love. They could find words for nothing else. Mrs. Franzman wisely left them to themselves, until the first transports of bliss were over. Then Lena led the way to her little room, and Joe and Rose were taken forcibly from their cots and fairly smothered with kisses before they were half awake.

“Josie, God has heard your prayers ; papa has come back !”

Lena could not contain her joy, but, sinking on her knees, poured out her gratitude to the Father in heaven. Then there were more kisses, and Rose had to display her beautiful teeth, and toddled around in her white

night-gown to show papa how she could walk ; while Joe danced about the room in a transport of childish glee.

Then Mrs. Franzman came in for her share of the rejoicing. Lena told her husband in a few, affectionate words how kind Pauline had been to her, how she owed all of her happiness during the past year to her dear friend, who was more than sister—to all of which Mrs. Franzman put in a modest disclaimer. The conversation ended with more kisses and more tears of joy and more expressions of fervent gratitude.

The children were reluctantly put to bed again, and Mrs. Franzman accompanied the happy couple to the little sewing-room behind the shop, and now for the first time Isaac and Lena began really to look at each other to see what changes time had wrought. Lena had altered for the better. Her face had rounded, her form had become more robust under the influence of the quiet life she had led, and her old-time beauty was gradually returning. Isaac, too, had changed wonderfully.

“I might have passed you on the street without knowing you,” said his wife.

His once frail and sickly physique had expanded ; his face was sunburnt and swarthy from exposure. His English had greatly improved, and although he retained many of the rugged expressions common to miners, he spoke like a thorough American. He was improved in every way. There was something, however, which changed him more than all else, and that was the peculiar expression of his eyes. There was a vague and



indefinable something in them which made an unfavorable impression on the beholder. They wore a hunted and anxious look, like those of a stag brought to bay. Those eyes, once so frank and straightforward, were now nervously cast down when one looked into them, as though fearful that the soul might through them betray its secret. Mrs. Franzman observed it, and ascribed it to a natural nervousness caused by excitement. Lena observed it, and attributed it to the months of toil and privation in the Western wilderness. As his wife looked at him with indescribable tenderness and affection, Isaac averted his eyes, and a guilty flush mantled his face and neck.

"If she knew—my God, if she knew!" he thought.

Lena knew nothing and observed nothing. She was alive only to the bliss of the moment. Her long-lost husband was with her again.

Isaac was soon at ease, and after partaking of a hastily-prepared supper, he consented to tell the story of his adventures. The women listened attentively, commiseratingly, while he related, in all its minute details, his experiences. He spoke of the taunts he had endured, of the abuse he had received, of the fruitless search after gold, of the vexatious disappointments and deluded hopes which formed a part of his existence. He spoke of his yearnings to return home, of his determination to succeed. He told his story with feverish rapidity. Certain portions seemed to affect him strangely. He uttered Sweeny's name but once, and then it seemed to choke him, and he had to pause and gasp for breath. Every now and then his wife would interrupt him to

ask a question, or to express sympathy. The latter part of his adventures, the incidents of the three months during which he lived with Sweeny, Isaac scarcely touched upon, except to relate, in a hasty and general way, that his search for gold had finally been crowned with success.

"And did you bring back a fortune?" inquired Mrs. Franzman, eagerly.

"Not a fortune," replied Isaac; "but I bring back twenty thousand dollars as my profit in the enterprise."

"Twenty thousand dollars!" cried Lena, in amazement. "Why, it is more than a fortune. What will we do with so much money?"

Isaac sat uneasily in his chair. The mention of the money seemed to unnerve him.

"But, my dear," continued his wife, "you wrote nothing about it in your last letter. Why did you not cheer my despondency by telling me of your luck?"

"Because," stammered Isaac, his voice becoming fainter, "I wanted to surprise you. In fact, we had not found the gold when I wrote to you."

Lena looked wonderingly at her husband. Why was his manner so agitated? Why did his eyes wear such a frightened expression? For a moment he caught his wife's searching glance and quailed before it. He thought he detected mistrust, suspicion, horror in her look, as though her lips had formed the words, "Murderer! thief!"

He was mistaken. His unsuspecting wife turned to receive the congratulations of Pauline.

"Twenty thousand dollars!" cried Mrs. Franzman,

with a radiant face. "What a stroke of good luck ! What a vast amount of good one can accomplish with that sum of money !"

"And to think that Isaac should have made it all by hard work ; by digging and toiling in that frightful country," exclaimed Lena, with a proud smile of satisfaction.

"Ah, therein lies the blessing of wealth," replied Pauline. "The consciousness of having acquired it honestly makes the possession of money truly blessed."

"I should not want to possess the advantages of money, unless it was honestly earned," said Lena, with decision. "I should prefer to live in poverty. How delightful it will be, in years to come, to contrast our former misery with our present prosperity, and to know that our wealth is the result of self-denial, courage and honest labor."

Isaac writhed in mental torture as the women spoke. Did they suspect? Were their words but a flimsy veneer to conceal their true sentiments? He sprang from his chair in a state of nervous tension. There was a wild delirium in his eye, and great beads of perspiration stood upon his forehead.

"It was honestly gained, I tell you!" he cried, gesticulating like a drunken man. "I toiled and I worked for it. It was mine by all rights of justice. God, how I stood abuse and wrong and became a slave, that I might bring home to Lena the wealth I promised her ! Yes, it is mine, and no one shall take it from me."

After a few incoherent exclamations he gradually recovered his self-possession and fell into a chair, pant-

ing from utter weakness. Lena, frightened at such un-called-for vehemence, ran to his side and took his hand in hers.

“Isaac, dear Isaac, what is the matter? Are you unwell?”

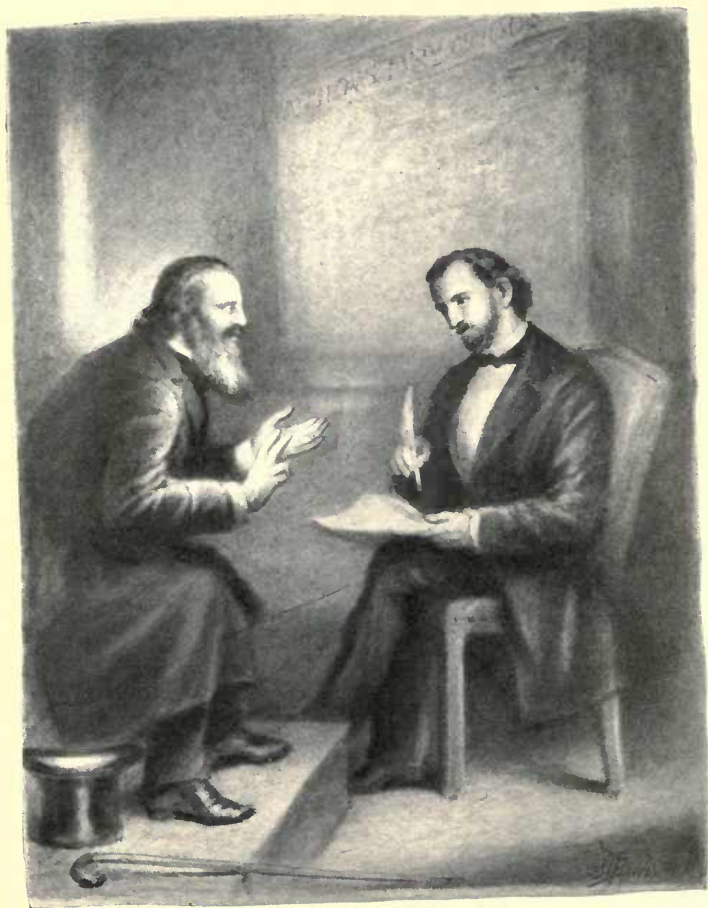
“Yes,” replied her husband, languidly, “I am sick. It is some trouble left over from my life of exposure in camp. It makes me excited and passionate. Now that I am home again with you, it will soon pass away. Did I frighten you, Lena?”

“Yes, a little. But never mind; let us be happy to-night, after so long a separation.”

The subject was dismissed and the remainder of the evening passed uneventfully. Isaac was more composed, and listened with evident interest to Lena’s account of her life during his absence. It was long after midnight when they retired, and the returned wanderer, exhausted by the day’s emotions, dropped off into a sound and refreshing sleep.







"It was an inspiration from on high," he said.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE RECEPTION.

"What though success will not attend on all,  
Who bravely dares, must sometimes risk a fall."

—*Smollett.*

THE news of Isaac's return spread quickly through the town, and the commotion it caused was indescribable. Exaggerated reports of his wealth were handed from mouth to mouth, growing with each repetition, until the erstwhile Shlemiel had blossomed into a Croesus; and good, pious burghers, who a year ago would have disdained to touch the poor man's garment, now flocked to kiss the rich man's hand.

The Rabbi was the first to greet his protégé, and his joy at the safe and prosperous return was unspeakably great.

"It was truly an inspiration from on high," he said, at length.

"But without your help and that of your congregation, the inspiration would have gone for nought," replied Schwartz.

"Thank God that I was able to be of some assistance. I only fear that all the poor fellows in town will now besiege us for money to go West. Come to my house, with your family, this evening, and we will celebrate your return in a befitting manner."

A memorable gathering met at Mr. Kauffman's house in the evening, to welcome the successful prospector. There were, first of all, the original contributors to the fund which sent Schwartz to California, each brimful of conscious pride at having assisted in such a successful venture. They came, with their wives and children, to touch the modern Midas and to hear from his own lips the marvelous story of his escapades.

There was also quite a number of men who had not contributed, under the mistaken notion that it would be money thrown away, and that Schwartz might do vastly better by seeking work at home. These came to welcome the hero, secretly deploring their short-sightedness, but willing to admit their error and share in the general rejoicing at the successful outcome of the experiment. There was, furthermore, a generous sprinkling of Sephardim, who, though they had no love for Schwartz or his "landsleut" (fellow countrymen), could not overcome a natural curiosity to hear what the new arrival had to say; for such resplendent reports of his vast wealth reached their ears that they felt instinctively he would henceforth be an important factor in the community.

By eight o'clock the Rabbi's house was so densely packed that Mr. Rosenheim, in his capacity of president, with a show of much importance and an appropriate passage from the Talmud, suggested transplanting the meeting into the adjoining synagogue, and the plan met with unanimous approval.

Isaac and Lena, modestly arrayed—for they had not yet had an opportunity to obtain raiment befitting their

new station in life—stood near the altar and distributed their smiles, nods and hand-shakes impartially. Rosenheim, as president, stood on the right, and evinced as much interest in the proceedings as though he were the hero. The fact that he had been the first to recognize the feasibility of Mr. Schwartz's scheme and to contribute thereto, and the unflagging interest he had evinced in the case since his departure, all qualified him to speak authoritatively on the subject. He had learned the story of Isaac's adventures by heart—that is to say, as much as Isaac had chosen to communicate to him, and retailed it to interested groups when the chief actor was otherwise occupied.

"Yes," he would say. "I tell you vot it is! De Vest is a fine country—a place of milk and honey, like de promised land. For vot do de children of Israel vant to go back to Jerusalem? Vy don't dey go to California and settle dere? It is mooch more sensible, ain't it? Vot does de Talmud say? '*Hakol baruch.*' Vell, vot's de difference vot de Talmud says? It means, 'More good tings vill come to him dat hustles dan to him dat sits down and waits.'" Having delivered himself of this oracular utterance, he turned to greet the next arrival, with an equally effective speech on the marvelous conditions in the Far West.

At Rosenheim's side, and listening with rapt attention and unwavering admiration to every word he uttered, stood his wife, a very diminutive specimen of humanity, who contrasted oddly with her bulky husband. Philosophers who argue that husband and wife grow to resemble each other with advancing years, found nothing in

this strangely assorted pair to sustain their theories. No greater difference could be imagined than existed between these two loving souls. He was tall, stout, florid and vivacious; she was small, thin, pale and silent. His features were large and generous; hers were pinched and meagre. But spiritually no couple were better mated, for they mutually adored each other. Rosenheim placed his wife on such a pedestal of love that her physical discrepancies were not apparent to him, and she considered him, with all his faults, the embodiment of perfection.

As Mrs. Rosenheim stood listening with a comprehensive smile of satisfaction to her husband, who for the twentieth time was relating the story of Isaac Schwartz's wanderings and commenting thereon, a casual observer would have surmised that the clothing merchant, and not Schwartz, was the hero of these strange adventures.

Mr. Louis Ehrlich was one of the most interested of the visitors. With his characteristic progressiveness, he looked upon the question of Schwartz's explorations from an impersonal standpoint, and endeavored to learn something of practical utility.

He asked numerous questions concerning the climate, the resources and the mode of transportation in the new territory, and evinced a keen interest in everything Mr. Schwartz had to say. He would have monopolized the conversation indefinitely had not the Rabbi drawn him away to discuss some improvement in the conduct of the religious schools. Standing in that little synagogue, Mr. Ehrlich might well be proud of the improvements that had been effected in the short time since he became



a member of the board. New hangings had been provided, the standing desks had made room for sensible and comfortable seats, and *mirabile dictu*, a small melodeon stood in one corner near the ark, and on the Sabbath added its plaintive voice to the chant of the Chazzan. These innovations had been strenuously opposed by Messrs. Rosenheim, Blumen, and other dignitaries of the congregation, but the impetuous zeal of the younger man eventually prevailed. Now that the novelty of the improvements had worn off, their erstwhile opponents reluctantly admitted their desirability, but just as strenuously objected to any new improvements that Mr. Ehrlich saw fit to suggest.

Not the least of the assembled guests was Mr. Solomon Basch, whose wife, thanks to a bad cold, could not accompany him. Such a stroke of luck had not befallen the good man in years, and he was not slow in taking advantage of it. Basch usually developed into a "free-thinker" when away from his wife. He was as lively as a school-boy on a vacation.

He, in the person of his wife, had contributed a dollar to the California fund, and he felt justified in standing proudly next to Schwartz and participating in the general jubilation. Indeed, what would the fund have been without his mite?

"You will never believe," he said in German, with his usual admixture of "Loshan Hokodash" (holy tongue), "how much 'kinne-sinne' (envy) I felt when you went away. If it had not been for my wife, by my soul, I would have gone along." He might have truth-

fully added that if it had not been for his wife, he would have had no desire to go along.

"Where is your wife?" Schwartz politely asked.

"She had a cold and insisted in talking, and so got hoarse. You can't stop a woman's talk. She calls German her mother tongue, probably because the father don't get a chance to use it. She took some goose-grease and honey, and now, '*unbeschrien*,' she can't talk at all. I think I will buy a gallon of the mixture. It's a good thing to have in the house."

Schwartz smiled. "You would have enjoyed California," he said; "there are no women there."

"Shema benai!" ejaculated Basch, with an ecstatic glance, "what a paradise! Much gold and no women."

"Yet I find that, after all, there is no place like home," said Schwartz.

"That's so," murmured the poor, down-trodden martyr. "There is no place like home. Men ought to be happy there, isn't?"

Mr. Basch, having exhausted his questions concerning California, went over to shake hands with Mr. Fuldheim, who had recently married, and gave him some excellent advice about the proper training of a wife.

A number of peddlers were among the visitors, stalwart young fellows but lately arrived from Germany, who, with a heavy pack on their shoulders, or, if their means allowed, with horse and wagon, wandered through the State, hawking a varied assortment of merchandise, and seeking to master the American tongue while they accumulated American dollars. It was a hard experience, but a salutary one. For the pious Jews, peddling

meant untold privations, a total abstinence of all food except eggs and such "Kosher" dried meats as they could carry with them. It meant a weary trudging through unfamiliar villages, over stony roads, amid hostile surroundings, from Sunday morning until Friday evening, and a short rest on the Sabbath in some synagogue town.

It was a career which might well have daunted the most enterprising youth, and yet thousands of "green-horns" adopted it, thrived at it, became wealthy through it. It was not considered degrading in those pioneer days, but eminently proper for a new arrival.

A little group of these young men edged their way to where Mr. Schwartz stood, and eagerly asked scores of questions concerning the El Dorado and the prospects of success.

"I have a notion," said one, after listening to Schwartz, "to throw away my pack and join the first caravan going West. Peddling is too slow for me. What do you think of it, Mr. Schwartz?"

Isaac sighed heavily. He thought of the days when he was a poor wanderer, with a ravenous appetite and a clear conscience.

"I believe," he said, "I should have been happier had I remained a peddler."

"Yes; but the drudgery and toil! They rob one of one's self-respect."

"They are but a fraction of the drudgery and the toil you will experience in the West. There are thousands of shattered and starving fellows in California who would be glad to exchange their prospects for your own."

And Schwartz related to the intensely interested listeners some of his own dismal experiences.

Mr. and Mrs. Bergthal were among the first to arrive and the last to leave. Mr. Bergthal had a kind word, in broken English, for every one except Rosenheim, whom he treated with a disdain befitting a despised rival. He took great pains to dwell, in Rosenheim's hearing, upon the wonderful increase in his sales during the past week, and to swear that "nodding on earth alretty could indooce him his cloding piziness to gif up und go to dose gold fields of California."

"Did dot suit I gif you vore vell?" he asked of Schwartz.

"Indeed it did," replied the latter. "I wore it during my entire stay in the West. I couldn't wear it out."

"Aha!" cried Bergthal, joyfully. "Vot did I told you? Dot suit vos der finest all-voll cassimere I had in der store. It costed me eight dollars und fifty cents, und vos a bargain. Rosenheim nefer had any goods like dot—"

Mr. Bergthal suddenly interrupted his eulogistic speech, which might have been continued indefinitely. His nervous glance had for a moment rested on a corner beneath the gallery, and had there espied, sitting comfortably side by side, his daughter Emma and Izzy, the son of Rosenheim. They were chatting like old friends, utterly regardless of the animosity which existed between their respective fathers. Emma was a pretty girl of eighteen, very blonde and very animated. Izzy was a rubicund young man of twenty, with a face and form closely resembling his father's, a bright, healthy nature,

with a decided penchant for the lively girl with whom he sat, in utter unconsciousness of the approaching storm.

"Oxcuse me a moment," said Jacob Bergthal to Mr. Schwartz. "I vant to speak mit my daughter a vord."

He pushed his way through the throng of guests to where his daughter sat and seized her arm.

"So! Dot's der vay you behind my back act, eh? Have I not told you alretty I don't vant none of my family mit Rosenheim's family to have anyt'ing to do? Young man, mind your own bissness, und don't bodder your head about Bergthal's Mammoth Cloding Emporium, or his daughter, eeder. Emma, come mit me along. If I ketch you again mit dot feller talking, I keep you locked up in der house on bread and vater."

Emma looked at Izzy in consternation and embarrassment; but Izzy only laughed. He was accustomed to Bergthal's eccentricities.

"Never mind, Emma," he said; "don't take it to heart." And then he added, in a whisper, "I'll see you later in the vestry."

But Emma found no opportunity for visiting the vestry, for her father kept her under strict surveillance during the rest of the evening, and confined his conversation with her to a severe berating of all that bore the name of Rosenheim.

Mr. Blumen, the treasurer of the synagogue, and a well-to-do manufacturer of mantillas, stood quite a long time in conversation with the returned hero, and patronizingly asked his views concerning the future prospects of the Western territory. He was a pompous, portly old man, and it cost Schwartz quite an effort to talk



with him when he remembered how often he had appealed to him in vain for work or encouragement in the days of his poverty. Indeed, Schwartz smiled sorrowfully as he recalled how the very men who had formerly passed him by indifferently or with contempt, now flocked to greet him and to curry his favor. The worship of the golden calf still had its votaries.

Barring the discomfiture of Izzy and Emma, it may be truthfully recorded that the reception was an unqualified success for every one in that crowded assembly, except for Mr. Schwartz, in whose honor it was prepared. The old ladies and gentlemen gossiped, exchanged opinions about business, and marveled at Isaac's providential success. The youths and maidens, who were there in goodly numbers, sat in the new pews or stood in the shadow of the old gallery, and indulged in pleasant chat or innocent flirtation, as is the custom with youths and maidens the world over, even unto this day.

The Rabbi and his wife flitted from group to group, entertaining here, expounding there, advising the old, admonishing the young. Everybody enjoyed the evening to its utmost, except Mr. Schwartz. Though he strove to be at ease and do his duty heroically, his brain was clouded, as if by some blood-stained mist; his head was bowed, as if by the weight of some great trouble. He spoke in a voice subdued and quivering with emotion. He glanced with fear and misgiving upon the many friends who clasped his hand. His spirit was crushed, his conscience tortured, and he mentally cursed the night that brought the inspiration to tempt fortune in the gold fields of California.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE NEW LIFE.

"Wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss,  
But cheerily seek how to redress their harms."  
—*Shakespeare.*

A NEW life dawned for the Schwartz family—a life compared to which their former existence appeared miserable indeed. On leaving the diggings, Isaac had carried his treasure to C——, where he found a purchaser for the metal, and exchanged it readily for bills of exchange and crisp bank notes. His first errand, on the day following his return, was to deposit his fortune temporarily in one of the city banks; his next thought was to rent and furnish a modest house, into which he would move his little family. To this Mrs. Franzman strenuously objected.

"Not yet, Isaac," she said. "Wait a few weeks, until you are rested. Lena has been a sister to me, and I cannot have her leave at a moment's notice. It will take me some time to get accustomed to the idea. In the meantime you and your family must remain with me as my guests."

Lena embraced her friend, and so the matter was satisfactorily settled.

For a few days Isaac indulged in absolute idleness, but this life soon began to pall upon him. The demon

of unrest took possession of his soul. There was a secret gnawing at his vitals, a voice of accusation ringing day and night in his ears. He would work, and in the fervor of his labors he would forget the terrors of the past. He therefore looked about him for a safe investment for his money. It was a serious matter to decide. Wealth which had been acquired with so much difficulty and at such a price, dared not be invested carelessly.

"Why not open a bank?" said Lena, in whose eyes the fortune was gigantic and sufficient for any enterprise.

"No; I do not understand banking."

"A factory, then, of some kind?"

"No; that, too, requires training and a knowledge of the article to be manufactured."

"Begin a Talmud school, and advertise for pupils," said Lena, in jest. "That is something you ought to understand."

"I'm beginning to forget even that," he replied; then added, reflectively, "I think I'll open a shop in a modest way, and work myself into opulence. It is the only thing I am fitted for."

At this juncture Lena suddenly remembered Mrs. Franzman's conversation relative to selling out her shop, and she imparted the information to her husband.

"If you could induce her to sell her business to you," she said, "I don't think you would have cause to regret it. It is an excellent stand. Besides, I have taken a fancy to millinery, and you should see what an expert I have become in the art of trimming bonnets."

"The idea is not a bad one," said Isaac; "but, take my word for it, Pauline was not in earnest, and will not consent to give up so profitable a shop."

"We will speak to her about it in the morning," replied Lena; and the subject was dismissed for the night.

Pauline, too, had been lying awake, thinking of her business cares.

"If I could only get out of it without loss," she mused, "and devote my time to my children! Ray is old enough to go to school, and Dave needs a mother's watchful care. I am tired of being bound to the store. Now if the Schwartzes would only take my stock and lease off of my hands, I would be satisfied; but I suppose they have more ambitious plans. However, I'll speak to them in the morning."

Owing to the unanimity of the contracting parties, Isaac and Pauline were not long in coming to an agreement. Within a week, and in consideration of a certain sum, Mrs. Franzman made over and sold to Mr. Schwartz her entire stock, fixtures and good-will. It was a decided bargain; but Pauline had some funds in bank, and could live comfortably. Now that Lena might desert her at any moment, the necessity to be with her children became imperative, and the voice of love spoke more eloquently than the prospect of further gain.

A few days later Isaac entered into possession of his new business. The old, familiar sign was taken down and repainted, and an announcement in the "Daily Herald" proclaimed the change to an interested public.

Mrs. Franzman and her family remained in their old home for some weeks longer, and then moved into private life in an up-town dwelling.

With the advent of new capital and a more vigorous management, the little store began to flourish beyond precedent. Lena had become a favorite with the old customers, and they gladly transferred their patronage to the new firm. The business grew daily. The room behind the store was crowded with milliners and trimmers, whose labor was taxed day and night to fill the orders which fairly poured in. The shelves were filled with new and attractive goods; the show-windows were replete with novelties. The new master made his purchases with absolute recklessness. There was nothing he would not buy if he took a fancy to it—no quantity too large for his wants, if the price was reasonable. Strange to say, he created a demand for the goods he bought, however unsaleable they may have been at first. Before many weeks had passed the shop became a household word. People flocked to its doors from idle curiosity, and once within its walls, they bought what they had come only to inspect. For boldness of style and novelty of management the establishment had no peer. The old fogies on the street shook their heads and predicted disaster.

“He has a little money and thinks it will last forever,” said Mr. Blumen; “but wait till he goes to the wall, and then it will be our turn to laugh.”

“Ya!” said Rosenheim, envious of such phenomenal success. “I tell you vot it is. He thinks he has a fortune, und dot it lasts forever; but he’ll find out



his mistake. Vot does der Talmud say? '*Kashim Mezonosof.*' Vell, vot's de difference vot de Talmud says? It means, 'It is pooty hard to climb up in de world, but it hurts more to climb down again.'"

Even Solomon Basch shook his head woefully every time he passed the store, and predicted disaster. He remonstrated one day with Mr. Schwartz, advising him to be more conservative in his dealings. "For," said he, "next to having a shrewish wife, the worst possible calamity is the loss of one's fortune."

Schwartz thanked him for his good advice, but continued in his mad career.

"Well, I warned him," said Basch to his wife, "and if anything happens he can't blame me. He must bear the consequences of his own folly."

And, for the first time since the Rabbi had joined them, Mrs. Basch agreed with her husband.

Mr. Bergthal and Mr. Basch devoted an entire evening to a discussion of Schwartz's recklessness, and the result was the prediction of certain failure.

"Dere is most men," said Bergthal, oracularly, "vot is born vidoud a cend in der pockets, und some men often dies dot vay, too. I'm afraid dot's de vay it vill be mid Schwartz."

In which sentiment Basch fully concurred, and secretly regretted the dollar he had contributed to a career which could only end in ruin and misfortune.

In spite of such dismal predictions, Isaac persevered in his course. He was the life and soul of the business. From early morning till late at night he was unceasingly employed. He threw himself into his work with

feverish agitation, as though it were torture for him to be alone with his thoughts. In vain his wife pleaded with him to allow himself a little recreation ; he could not rest.

“ You will make yourself ill,” she urged ; “ and then the business will be neglected.”

“ Leave me alone, Lena,” he replied. “ The store needs watching. It is growing, and, like a growing child, demands constant attention. Without it, it would languish. I am only happy when I am at work.”

So he toiled on restlessly, incessantly ; and when night fell, slumber came unbidden, and the tired head and weary heart had a brief respite from sorrow. In truth, work seemed to agree with him. He was growing stout and strong. His former debility had entirely left him. Lena noted the change with delight ; but there was one thing which still worried and puzzled her, and that was the sinister expression of her husband’s eyes. She would often watch him furtively, and rack her brain to divine its cause. If he were idle but for a moment, there came over his face a look so woeful and terrified, so piteous and pleading, as though he were gazing upon an awful spectre which would not be dismissed. Deep lines of pain would harrow his brow and cheeks, and his figure seemed to shrink and abase itself, as though it were undergoing torture.

Months passed, and the business continued to grow. Before Schwartz had been in possession half a year, the premises were far too small for the requirements of the patrons. It became necessary to buy the adjoining store and throw the two into one ; and this improvement

gave the establishment an impetus which far exceeded the expectations of those who had watched its marvellous growth. Isaac and his family moved into a spacious residence among the élite on Pearl Street.

“What a lucky man that Schwartz is!” was heard on every side. “What an excellent manager!”

Had they but known! It was not Isaac’s careful management, but his utter recklessness that led to this result. He would have been content to lose the fortune which weighed so heavily upon his soul. He had learned to hate the thought of money. The jingle of gold awakened recollections which drove him to despair. He squandered it madly; but it invariably returned to him greatly augmented. Oh, what a world of grief that money was to him! If he had but left the bag of gold buried in the earth beneath the cabin, what an agony of remorse he would have escaped!

He became absolutely foolhardy in his expenditures. He withdrew a princely sum from his business and spent it upon an almost worthless railroad stock, which prudent speculators would not touch. The money was scarcely invested before the market took a turn, and the stock rose, and continued rising, contrary to all expectations. At the end of two months Schwartz had doubled the wealth invested. Gold—despised, detested, execrated gold—rained upon him. Speculations which would have frightened a cautious capitalist, and which offered every prospect of a prompt and considerable loss, recovered, as if by magic, when Schwartz embarked in them. Gradually speculation became a necessity to the harassed man. His business, extensive

as it was, was no longer sufficient to occupy his mind and divert it from its morbid broodings. His nature craved forgetfulness of the sinister idea that poisoned his existence. There was no escape but in excitement, and the feverish restlessness which he displayed served but to increase his wealth, and thereby to add to the burden of his curse. Before he had been at home twelve months he found his original fortune quadrupled. He was a rich man, indeed—a Midas, whose touch converted into gold.

If Isaac was an altered man in regard to his material prospects, he was still more deplorably changed in his religious views. His wonderful activity in money-making left him little time and less inclination for the exercise of his religious duties. From the day he had left the diggings he had apparently become indifferent to the rites and ceremonies which had formerly exercised so great an influence over his life. The relics which he had brought with him from the cabin—his phylacteries and prayer book—filled him with superstitious dread, and he buried them at the bottom of a closet. He neglected his daily devotions. His morbid mind conceived the idea that prayer from the lips of such an offender would be unacceptable to the Lord, and would rebound from the door of heaven a curse. Instead of religion, superstition held him in her relentless embrace, and though his better judgment sought to shake off its influence, he found himself deeper in its grasp day by day.

The dietary laws, the observance of the Sabbath, the many ceremonies which he had observed since boyhood,

and whose beauty he had so frequently extolled, were distorted by his disordered imagination into senseless rubbish ; and he who had so loved the Torah and the Talmud now scarcely bestowed a thought upon Judaism. His mental perturbation sought relief in the silliest directions, such as fumbling nervously with his coat buttons, touching chairs and tables in certain superstitious ways while speaking, and interpreting the most commonplace events into portentous omens. At times he felt ashamed of his actions before his employés, his wife and his children, but his intellect seemed entirely enchained by superstition, from which he could not by any possibility free himself.

He shuddered at the recollection of his awful deed. He shuddered at the most trivial incident that recalled his crime. A sound unnerved him. His agitated mind seemed constantly laboring with its terrible secret, to divulge which he had not the requisite courage. He seemed in perpetual struggle with the grim spectre of fear.

He was constantly recalling the past, viewing its horrible culmination through an exaggerated atmosphere of excitement and horror. He was often bent on making a confession to his wife, but as often recoiled, for he dreaded the effect it might have on her. His cowardly conscience rebelled against its better judgment, and the secret lay locked within his own breast, growing, gnawing, distorting his conception of everything.

He dreaded solitude, for in isolation the spectre of the murdered man was ever at his side. He had an equal dread of society, for he had a morbid impression that



his secret betrayed itself in his face or in a gesture. He shunned the companionship of his former acquaintances, and spent most of his evenings at home. Gloomy evenings they were. Lena tried at first to cheer him up, to read to him, to discover the cause of his sorrow; but, failing to influence him, she resigned herself patiently, and devoted herself to her children.

One evening Isaac was more despondent than ordinarily. Joe and Rose had tried in vain to make their father laugh, but grief was gnawing at his heart, and he was in no mood to enter into their artless sports.

"Come, children," Lena said; "papa is tired, and you are annoying him. Let me put you to bed."

"Papa don't play with us like he used to," said Joe, resentfully, as he left the room.

Lena sighed. "Times are changed, indeed," she thought. She rarely heard a pleasant word from her husband now.

Isaac sighed, too, as he overheard his son's remark.

"Ah, if I could be as light-hearted as I once was," he murmured. "But there can be no happiness for me."

When Lena returned, she found her husband listlessly turning the pages of a book, while his eyes seemed to be gazing miles away.

"I have a favor to ask, dear," said Lena, drawing a chair close to his side.

Isaac recalled his wandering spirit with a start.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Promise me in advance that you will not refuse."

"I promise," he answered, with a weary smile, stroking his wife's head affectionately.

"Do you remember when we left Germany, how anxious your sister Bertha was to go with us?"

"Yes, I remember."

"And how we promised her that when we were wealthy, we would write for her to come?"

"Yes, poor girl."

"I want you to let your sister come to us."

"Why, Lena, what a sudden notion!"

"Not at all sudden. I have been thinking it over for weeks. What chance is there in Bavaria for a girl like Bertha? She is pretty, 'tis true, but poor. Your father has lost the greater portion of his wealth. A girl in Germany must have a dowry in order to marry well."

"You had none, Lena."

"I was an exception. You took me for love."

"And, after all, you didn't marry well."

"I am satisfied," replied Lena, gazing fondly at her husband.

Isaac's eyes grew brighter as he thought of that long and happy courtship in the old country, the merry walks in the forest, the longing to get married, the secret wedding. He drew his wife to him and kissed her lovingly. Lena continued with the subject in hand.

"Even if she could find a husband," she said, "she might wait for years before she could get permission from the authorities to marry. Let her come to America. We can provide for her nicely. See what a help she will be to me about the house."

"I will think about it."

"No; you promised in advance to accede. You owe it to your sister to do something for her."

"Will you and she get along well together?"

"I will take care of that. Bertha and I were always fast friends. She shall be a dear sister to me."

Isaac stroked his beard and thought it over.

"The children require more attention than formerly," urged Lena, "and I have my hands full. Bertha will be a great help to me."

Poor Lena had another more potent reason, which she left untold. Her husband, in his moments of despondency, neglected her sadly. She had long felt uneasy at his idiosyncrasies, and at times was very unhappy. Bertha would be a companion, a confidant, and she yearned for the coming of her sister-in-law.

"I've no doubt you are right," said Isaac, after mentally viewing the project. "She will be a companion to both of us. I will write to her at once."

The letter was dispatched next day, with an enclosure sufficient to defray all expenses incidental to the trip, and a generous gift to old Schwartz as a balm to heal the wound caused by his daughter's departure. Bertha did not require much persuasion. The return of mail brought an affirmative response, and four weeks later Bertha set foot upon the blessed shores of America. Isaac journeyed to New York to receive his sister, and brought her home in triumph.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE NEW ARRIVAL.

"Heart on her lips, and soul within her eyes,  
Soft as her clime and sunny as her skies."—*Byron.*

THROUGH the length and breadth of busy Cedar Street—yea, even in the homes of the haughty Sephardim Jews—Bertha was the theme of conversation, and was welcomed with genuine admiration; for Bertha was a striking addition to the ranks of Jewish maidens in B——. There are as many types of beauty as there are individuals, and each of them may have the power to turn some good man's head and cause him to develop some latent talent for folly. Bertha's face, on the evening of her reception, turned the heads of almost the entire male contingent.

It is a pleasure to record, in simple truth, that Bertha's eyes were dark and roguish under their long lashes; that her cheeks were rosy, verging towards the florid; that dimples formed little Cupid-nests near her chin; that her hair was jet black, and fell in natural ringlets about her shapely neck; that her hands were the prettiest imaginable, her form graceful and her bearing regal. Had you been there on that memorable evening, you would have seen all this, and more; for Bertha was indescribable. One could no more draw a

word-picture of her than describe a summer day in all its warmth and luscious charm. But, having once lived through such a day, its memory will cling to you forever; the scent of the hay, the humming of the bees, the song of the lark, the ripple of the stream will always linger in your recollection. And so it was with Bertha. Hers was no simpering beauty, no affected posing, but a sturdy, healthy, simple loveliness—a charm to the beholder.

In matters of education, too, Bertha was under no disadvantage. She had been fortunate in winning the friendship of the Burgomaster's daughter in her native village, and with her had benefited by the instructions of a governess of no mean ability. Her active mind had quickly grasped whatever was presented, and turned every scrap of information to excellent account. She sang with a weak, but accurate and harmonious voice, and, to the surprise of her new acquaintances, spoke a little English, with a broad Teutonic accent, but distinctly enough to be understood. She had, moreover, a spontaneous sense of her own ability, and felt thoroughly at home in any situation. When introduced to the many individuals who called to pay their respects, she quickly and without effort adjusted herself to her new acquaintances, and acted as though she had been brought up with them from tender infancy.

Although there were many pretty girls present, there was not one comparable to Bertha in personal attraction, in easy grace of manner, in charm of conversation. Both Isaac and Lena, whose recollection of their sister was limited to her childhood days, were astonished at



her appearance, and gratified at the impression she made on her new circle of associates.

The old folks, from portly Mr. Rosenheim and his diminutive wife down to the least significant of the members of the congregation, were loud in her praise; the young girls all evinced their eagerness to become her friends and confidantes; and as to the young men, they stood for the most part shyly aloof, and surveyed her radiant German cheeks with feelings ranging from intense interest to positive admiration. Never was reception more successful.

Mr. Ehrlich had early evinced a desire to monopolize Bertha's society, and, much to the displeasure of several other gentlemen, stood by her side and conversed with her on topics of his own selection.

"Your brother tells me you sing well," said Ehrlich. "May we not hope that you will favor us with a song?"

"The spirit is willing, but the voice is weak," Bertha replied, smiling. "Like Faust, I yearn to reach the unattainable. Some day I may sing for you, but do not want to jeopardize my popularity so soon after my arrival."

"From what I have heard, I feel sure you underrate your abilities," said Ehrlich. "I see you have read Goethe. He is my favorite author."

"And mine," replied the girl, earnestly. "All Germany admires Goethe. There are few people of culture who have not wept with his Werther, grieved with his Gretchen, and smiled with his Dorothea. Even in our little village Goethe is a demi-god."

"You have evidently read much," said Ehrlich.

“Not as much as I should have liked to read. Our Jewish parents still frown upon any secular studies as being dangerous to our spiritual well-being. Hebrew lore still forms the staple of our instruction. I am glad, however, that the younger generation is breaking away from musty traditions, and setting up new standards. The most omnivorous readers in the small localities are Jewish youths and maidens. In our village we formed a circulating library several years ago, and read whatever we could obtain.”

“That is good news,” exclaimed Ehrlich, with an intonation of delight. “I had feared that the spark of progress that had been struck in German Judaism had died out for lack of fuel. If our people once read and take an interest in matters outside of the Torah and Talmud, there is hope of a renaissance of all that is best and purest in the world’s religion. We were the ‘People of the Book.’ I should like to see Israel become the ‘People of Books.’ Let the Jews once begin to absorb knowledge, as they did centuries ago, and they will become the conquerors of the earth through sheer force of their superior intellect.”

Bertha listened with evident pleasure. She had not expected to hear such enthusiasm, and such pronounced views (which coincided with her own), in America, where she had been led to expect indifference to all but money-making.

“Heine, too,” said Bertha, “has made a name for himself, although neither Jew nor Gentile care to claim him as their own. Many have been the acrimonious discussions among us as to whether we ought to read

his works at all, after he so shamefully deserted his ancestral faith. But his intellect conquered our prejudice, and having once read the outpourings of his master mind, it was no longer a question as to whether we should read, but as to how quickly we could obtain more to read."

"I can easily comprehend the motives that led to Heine's apostasy," replied Ehrlich. "The narrow Judaism by which he found his intellect circumscribed must have been a galling restraint. A soul such as his must have room to expand—nay, more, must have an audience to appeal to—and failing to find spiritual succor and encouragement at home, he sought it in the great world."

"Then you do not condemn him for renouncing Judaism and going over to the enemy?" asked Bertha.

"I do not blame him. I am sorry for him. The happiness he sought will never crown his life-work. No Jew can ever become a Christian at heart. He may cast off his allegiance to the congregation, and acknowledge himself a follower of the Gentile Church, but in his heart he is still a monotheist, and the doctrines of his new creed are as strange and incomprehensible to him as would be the teachings of Vishnu. Heine will not be happier on account of his apostasy, but if he ever recovers from his present malady, his genius will probably reach a greater development by his amalgamating with that circle which represents wealth, power and freedom."

Mr. Ehrlich, launched upon a subject which was most congenial to him, was loth to terminate the conversation, but Mr. Jacoby, a rising young merchant, interposed in

the interest of the other gentlemen present, who found themselves cut off from their divinity by the too assiduous attentions of one man. Conversation thereupon descended to social trivialities and became general.

Miss Schwartz expressed her opinion that where there were so many young people, social amusements must necessarily be developed to their fullest extent.

"That is unfortunately not the case," replied Mr. Anhalt, a middle-aged man, who devoted his leisure, after working in Blumen's factory, to reading law. "Outside of the synagogue there is little to draw our people together. Every one is so intent on making a living or amassing a fortune, that there is little time for social intercourse. The men meet occasionally at each other's houses and play cards, while the ladies at an occasional 'Kaffeeklatsch' exchange confidences concerning their dressmakers or their children. The young people, however, have little or no diversion."

"It is a deplorable state of affairs," said Mr. Jacoby, "and speaks ill for the progressiveness of this town. I visited my cousin in Richmond recently, a town but half the size of this, and was taken to a dance at the club—a most enjoyable affair. Why shouldn't we have a club of our own? We have young people enough to make it a brilliant success."

"A good idea," cried Bertha, eagerly; for though Bertha was fond of serious matters, she was by no means averse to social pleasures. "Count on my attendance at every dance."

Ehrlich had on numerous occasions considered the advisability of such an innovation, and seeing Miss

Schwartz so enthusiastic on the subject, he, too, caught the infection.

"Incidentally," he said, "we might form a class in literature."

"And read Heine and Goethe," suggested Miss Schwartz.

"And possibly Shakespeare and Milton," added Mr. Anhalt.

"There is no time like the present," exclaimed Ehrlich, impressed more than ever with the possibilities of the plan. "Everybody seems to be imbued with the spirit of sociability, and we ought to succeed in securing enthusiastic support for so worthy an undertaking."

With pencil and note-book in hand, he forthwith interviewed the guests, and in a short time obtained the names of a sufficient number of men to make the club a possibility.

The participants in Bertha's reception thereupon resolved themselves into a deliberative body, and appointing Mr. Ehrlich chairman, proceeded to launch the new club in a worthy manner.

"So harmonious has been the meeting," said the chairman, "that I think we had better call it the 'Harmony Club.'"

"Let us make it the Harmony Social and Literary Club," suggested Mr. Anhalt; and the name met with unanimous approval.

Thus was the first Jewish Club in B—— called into existence. It more than fulfilled the expectations of its founders. It subsequently became the rendezvous of card-playing men, of gossiping women, of studious and



merry-making youths and maidens. Even the exclusive Sephardim gradually sought admittance to its ranks, and differences of caste and of descent were in time obliterated through its friendly influence.

The harmony pervading Bertha's reception was threatened with obliteration by an unfortunate occurrence. Izzy Rosenheim had early in the evening descried Emma Bergthal among the guests, and had hovered about her as the moth hovers about the fascinating flame of the candle, or the sparrow about the hypnotizing eye of the cobra. Rarely had these two yearning souls with rival fathers an opportunity of meeting, and the present occasion promised untold delights. Alas! Mr. Bergthal, as though scenting danger, kept near his daughter, and Izzy's hopes declined as the evening wore on. Bertha's charms had no attraction for him; her musical laugh found no answering vibration in his heart, as it did in the hearts of other men. His goddess was on the other side of the room, closely guarded by a zealous dragon—a watchful father. At length hope dawned.

When Ehrlich broached the subject of a club to Mr. Bergthal, that gentleman immediately became an enthusiastic advocate of the scheme.

“Aha!” he cried, in delighted accents, dropping his rules of grammar and his vocabulary in his eagerness to express his views. “Vot did I told you long ago alretty? Tree years ago I vos for a club in favor. Id's a good t'ing. Just look vot a gonvenience ven you vant to blay cards, oder ven you vant politics to talk, oder ven you away from your vife vant to get for an

hour. Vere is Solomon Basch? I bet you he vill join dot club tree times alretty. It vos a blessing for a man like Basch."

In his willingness to find Basch and help Ehrlich secure additional members, Mr. Bergthal relinquished the arm of his daughter, who, as soon as she found herself free from paternal surveillance, edged in the direction of the despairing Izzy.

"Come," she cried, gaily. "I've escaped. Let's hurry into the hall before papa discovers my absence."

"Oh, Emma!" sighed Izzy, rapturously. "How sweet you look, and how I longed to speak to you!"

Emma's eyes looked volumes, but she did not reply until they were safely out of the hot room in the cool corridor.

"You darling boy!" she then exclaimed. "Do you think I didn't yearn to be with you, too?" And she looked so rapturously at the ecstatic Izzy that he unceremoniously kissed her.

Mr. Bergthal's overflowing energy found a vast field for usefulness during the next half hour. A casual bystander would have imagined that the scheme had originated entirely in his own brain, and would die of inanition without him. It was not until the club had been duly organized that he bethought himself of his daughter, and zealously sought for her among the guests. But Emma had disappeared, like a second Iphigenia transported to Tauris.

At length the anxious father, thinking that she might have wandered to the dining-room in search of cooling refreshment, left the room and almost stumbled over the

amorous couple on the stairs. They were sitting in close juxtaposition, and were very much engrossed in each other.

Kissing is unhealthy if one is caught in the act, and love's sweet dream is apt to be disturbed when an irate father comes unexpectedly upon the scene.

In a second, unsuspecting Izzy felt a powerful grasp upon his coat collar, and found himself suddenly elevated to a standing posture. Before he quite comprehended the full extent of the disaster, he felt Bergthal's hot breath upon his cheek and saw the glare of Bergthal's eyes transfix his own.

"You rascal, you shneak, you humbug, you—" Bergthal gasped for new words with which to express his opinion of the reprobate, but finding none that would do the subject justice, he shook Izzy until that young man's teeth chattered.

"Let up!" he cried, when he found his breath. "You are tearing my coat."

"Tearing your goat? Ha! You goot-for-nodding nixnutz! I guess it vos one from Rosenheim's shtock. Dey tear if you look at dem only. You are as goot for nodding as everyding dot belongs to Rosenheim. Tore your goat! I haf a goot notion your head to tear off alretty. Vot you mean, eh? Sitting on der shteps und kissing my daughter. I'll show you how my daughter to kiss!"

Izzy needed no instructions in this particular accomplishment, nor did he relish Mr. Bergthal's course of teaching, which consisted of sundry cyclonic shakes and pulls, and which were undignified, not to say painful.

"Hey! let me alone, will you, you old idiot?" cried Izzy, in his righteous rage, while poor Emma wept aloud, undecided whether to side with an outraged father or a discomfited lover.

"I'm an idiot, eh?" shouted Bergthal, enraged; and the shaking process re-commenced, till Izzy begged for mercy.

The noise brought a number of guests to the spot, and Mr. Bergthal, being exhausted by his violent exercise, and rather ashamed of the scene he was creating, relinquished his hold on the boy's collar.

"Now, I vant to told you one t'ing," he said, excitedly. "Dis is der second time I ketch you making love mit mine daughter. If I found you out again, I vont shpank you, begause you vasn't vorth soiling my hands on; aber I'll sit you down so dot you don't can got up again in six months. You undershtand me, eh? Tell your fader, mit my gobliments, dot you don'd vos dry yet behind der ears, and he shall you mit a shtrap treat, till you vos old enough to go by yourself out. Come, Emma, ve vill go home alretty. Dis is no place for us."

And he led his weeping child away.

Uninterrupted by this tearful episode, the reception continued in undiminished splendor, and wound up with a bountiful repast.

"Yust like a vedding," whispered Mr. Rosenheim to his wife; and she sagely shook her head and answered, "Yes, Mr. Schwartz makes good use of his wealth."

"I tell you vot it is," remarked Rosenheim; "I would radder eat a 'Kosher' feast like dis, surrounded by de

comforts of home, den to eat 'treifa' among savages in de Vest. Vot does de Talmud say—"

The quotation was unfortunately lost, for at that moment Rabbi Kauffman arose, and, true to his calling, delivered an impromptu sermon, the object of which was to drink to the health of Bertha Schwartz and to wish her a happy sojourn among her new friends. The noisy acclaim with which the remarks were received gave evidence that the speaker had echoed the prevailing sentiment and struck a popular chord.

When the guests left, Ehrlich accompanied the Rabbi and Mrs. Kauffman home. A sincere attachment had grown up between the two men, born of admiration for each other's sincerity and strength of character. They discussed the new club in all its bearings. The minister feared it might prove prejudicial to the welfare of the synagogue.

"On the contrary," replied Ehrlich, laughing, "by bringing the young people together, it may provoke more marriages, and thereby provide new members for the congregation. Besides, the bonds of matrimony are always a source of revenue to the minister."

"And why don't you marry, my friend?" asked the Rabbi, with the match-making instincts of his profession.

"Oh, I am in no hurry! Let me first make my way, and then find the right girl. Many a poor fellow marries in haste, and is then kept so busy making both ends meet that he hasn't the leisure to repent."

"True," replied the Rabbi; "marriage is a game of chance."



"The only game of chance," said Ehrlich, "which the clergy does not discourage."

"We are taught by the book," returned the other, with a smile, "to love our neighbors."

"Not a difficult thing to do," retorted Ehrlich, "when the neighbor is young and pretty."

"And has brown eyes and rosy cheeks," said Mr. Kauffman. "Now, if I were a young man, I think I could fall in love with—"

"Sh! Don't let us get personal. When a matrimonial match is struck, it is so easy for some one to get burned. Good-night!"

"Dear me!" said the Rabbi to his wife, as he looked after the young man, meditatively, "I think I had better read up my marriage service; I may need it soon."

Nor was the good Rabbi the only soul who allowed his mind to wander on the subject of matrimony that evening. Given a pretty girl of an eligible age, and matrimonial projects are as apt to form about her personality as doves are prone to congregate about a granary well stocked with tempting corn.

That such speculations are for the most part fallacious does not deter amiable natures from indulging in them. From the Queen of England, whose match-making propensities were well known, down to the most humble servant in the kitchen, there is a keen fascination in imagining connubial combinations which, while they may never be realized, open an endless vista of interesting possibilities. Bertha had not been in B—— twenty-four hours before well-meaning papas and mammas

were linking her name with that of some favorite son, and a score of young men were wondering, in the secret recesses of their brains, when and whom the dark-eyed damsel would choose.

A new life seemed to dawn for the Schwartzes. Bertha's advent lifted the family out of its sad and gloomy groove. There was much for the visitor to see, and Isaac and his wife vied with each other in escorting her about town. There was no end of company in honor of the new arrival, who was voted a valuable acquisition to society. These visits had to be returned, and during several weeks Isaac found himself with an engagement on hand for every evening, and with little time to indulge in remorseful broodings.

By the end of the month, however, the novelty had worn off and the dreaded reaction had set in. The voice of conscience, which had been momentarily drowned by enjoyment and festivity, refused to remain silent. With the approach of the Jewish holidays, self-reproach, remorse and terror again seized upon the soul of the harassed man, poisoning his existence and rendering life a burden, from which there seemed no possible escape.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

"Who by repentance is not satisfied  
Is not of heaven or earth; for these are pleased.  
By penitence, the Eternal's wrath's appeased."

—*Shakespeare.*

ROSH-HASHANNA had come—the holy day on which Jehovah views his people from his radiant throne, and inserts their names in the book of life and happiness for the ensuing year. For the pious Jew this is a sacred day of preparation for the still more holy Day of Atonement, on which the book of life is sealed and man's fate irrevocably decreed.

The peddler, returned from his tireless activity on the road and laying aside his travel-stained raiment, prepared to appear before his God; the merchant closed his place of business and exchanged his counting-house thoughts for a sentiment of religion. All Israel was lifted above the prosaic exigencies of every-day life into the poetic realms of sublime spirituality.

It was the morning of the New Year. The Jews were streaming into their synagogue to observe the sacred day. Schwartz stood indifferently at the door of his establishment, watching his friends pass. No sentiment of devotion urged him to follow. His wife, dressed in her holiday raiment, having waited in vain

for him to accompany her to worship, came to the store in search of him.

"Isaac," she said, tenderly laying her hand on his shoulder, "do you know what day this is?"

He seemed to awaken from his revery.

"Yes; it is Rosh-Hashanna."

"Why do you not go to the synagogue?" she asked, in a tone of mild remonstrance. "It is a sin to keep the business open to-day."

"Why should it be a sin?" he asked, indifferently. "I will not go to the service."

"Why not, my dear?"

"I have an aversion to the place. It would be mockery for me to go."

Lena's eyes were wet with tears.

"Isaac," she said, pleadingly, "will you not tell me what is weighing upon your mind, what is making you so unhappy?"

She had asked the same question a hundred times, but her husband had always evaded an explanation.

"Nothing, Lena; I have told you so before. I must become wealthy, and my business is of more importance to me than the synagogue. Don't bother me with foolish questions."

"But I may go to 'Schul' with Bertha, may I not, Isaac?"

"Certainly, if you wish. I cannot keep you. I will stay here and work."

"Don't work, husband. Close up the store. Indeed it is a sin. You did not use to be so indifferent to your religion. You were formerly a God-fearing man."

"Times have changed. I was poor then ; now I am prosperous."

"The more reason to be thankful and devout. Isaac, promise me you will close up the store."

Isaac muttered an evasive reply and turned on his heel. Lena, sad and disheartened, returned to her home for Bertha. Scarcely had she gone before Isaac's defiant and sullen demeanor changed. For a while he strode up and down his store, with clenched fist and haggard look, and then, as if seized with a sudden impulse, he dismissed his astonished employés, and, hastily taking in his signs, he barred the shutters and locked up his establishment. It was not a sentiment of religion, nor yet a desire to please his wife, that prompted this action, but rather a superstitious dread that some catastrophe might result from a debasement of the holiday. He put on his hat and wandered restlessly and aimlessly down the street, starting in terror at every sound. Weary of his aimless walk, he finally bent his steps up High Street, towards the Broker's Exchange, utterly regardless of the sanctity of the day. To avoid a possible encounter with co-religionists, on their way to divine service, he wandered furtively through a number of narrow side streets, brooding over the one subject which scarcely left him by day or by night—his crime.

"Thief! Murderer! Stop him!"

The cry rang piercingly from a third-story window, where a hysterical woman was being savagely beaten by a drunken husband.

Isaac stopped in terror at the sound. For a moment



fright seemed to paralyze him. The perspiration stood out upon his forehead. Could they mean him? No, it was impossible. He looked about him, but could see no one to whom the epithets could apply.

"Murderer! Assassin! For heaven's sake stop him!"

The cry was repeated louder than before.

Schwartz had reached a state of nervousness where reality and imagination were so curiously interwrought as to be well nigh inseparable. Each emotion became to him an acute sensation. At a sudden sound, a flash of light, or a careless word, all rational thought seemed to vanish and superstitious dread held absolute sway. He could not distinguish the probable from the improbable. To him the accusing cry could have but one meaning.

"My God, they have found me out at last!" cried the wretched man, turning vaguely, like a hunted stag, for some chance of escape. What was there to be done? He hid his eyes in his hands, in order not to see the crowds of people that were attracted to the spot. He felt that his only safety lay in flight, and, in his terror and dismay, he began to run as fast as his trembling limbs would carry him. It was like a hideous nightmare, in which one tries to flee from danger, but cannot.

"Stop him!" cried some one in the crowd, encouraged by the cry from the window. "There goes the thief!"

Instantly a dozen excited idlers started in hot pursuit of the fleeing man. Before many moments he was caught, and found himself surrounded by a wildly gesticulating mob.

A policeman had arrived by this time, and, with an ostentatious display of authority, he grasped Isaac roughly by the arm and brandished his formidable club.

"I am innocent, gentlemen; indeed I am," protested Isaac, feebly.

"We will see when we get to the station-house," replied the officer, who, having come late, had not the slightest idea of his prisoner's offence. He dragged his unwilling captive along, with a hooting crowd of urchins at his heels. Isaac was dumb with shame and mortification. Tears rolled unhindered down his pale and agitated face. The end, the dreaded discovery had come at last. What would become of Lena and the children?

The station-house was a long way off, and the crowd which surrounded Isaac grew denser with every step. With it grew his misery and humiliation. At length they reached their destination. With mingled feelings of terror and despair, Isaac gazed upon the brick building, with its iron-barred windows. How terrible the massive, nail-incrusted doors appeared to him! With his captor and a few of his accusers he entered the building, while the jeering crowd happily remained outside. The sergeant was absent for the moment, and Isaac took his seat upon the prisoner's bench, buried his head in his palms and waited dejectedly.

With startling vividness, like a series of horrible pictures, there flashed across his mind all the terrible episodes he had undergone in the West—the torments, the torture, the struggles, the crime! What could he

say to the judge in extenuation? What plea could he enter for mercy?

After a dreary pause of ten minutes the sergeant entered. He recognized his prisoner as an old acquaintance.

"Why, Mr. Schwartz," he asked, good humoredly, "how is this? Of what crime have you been guilty?"

Isaac found no reply. The consciousness of his guilt was overwhelming. He stood trembling before his judge, unable to utter a word in self-defence. The policeman made a statement to the effect that Schwartz had been guilty of disturbing the peace. A gentleman testified that some one had cried "Stop thief!" and, seeing Schwartz run, he naturally concluded that he was the culprit, and accordingly assisted in his capture. Besides these two, there were no accusers and absolutely no evidence against the man. The sergeant, who prided himself upon his intimacy with the rich and respected merchant, discharged him, with profuse apologies for the unfortunate mistake.

Isaac seized his hat, expressed his thanks and hurried out into the street.

"Thank God," he muttered, "I am safe! But for how long? The discovery and exposure will come in time, and there will be no escape."

He crept through side streets and alleys to his home, and, throwing himself upon a sofa, wept as if his heart would break. If he could but confide his secret to Lena! He had a dozen times within the last week been on the point of telling her, but the fear of losing her esteem, her respect, her love, restrained him. He

feared that his wife might spurn him as a murderer and leave him to his despair.

Truly Prometheus, chained to his rock, with vultures tearing out his vitals, endured no greater agony than this conscience-coward, fettered by a tenacious memory to his crime-stained pillar, with dread and remorse tugging at his very soul.

The constant, unremitting recollection of his awful deed, which effectually made him a pariah in the midst of affluence, almost crazed him. Suddenly sinking upon his knees, he poured out his grief in prayer. He, the murderer, who had not prayed for almost a year, now lifted up his voice to heaven and pleaded for forgiveness and forgetfulness. When he arose he felt, as though a weight of sorrow had been lifted from his heart.

The two women, unconscious of this occurrence, walked slowly towards the synagogue.

"Alas!" said Bertha, "I hardly know my brother, he is so changed. There was never a happier, gayer man than he; and now—why, all my endeavors fail to bring a smile to his lips."

"Ah, Bertha, if you knew how wretchedly unhappy I am," replied Lena. "It is constantly getting worse, instead of better."

"Have you no idea what is troubling him?"

"How can I tell? He will not confide in me. He must have had a terrible experience out West, which has shaken his reason."

"It is not as bad as that."

"It is perhaps worse than I imagine. There are

moments when he is almost insane. He seems to brood over one idea. I often watch him, without his knowing it, and then I am frightened at the look of grief and terror on his face."

"Perhaps some crime has been committed," said Bertha, trembling at her own suggestion.

"I have had the same idea," cried Lena, seizing her sister-in-law passionately by the hand. "God grant that he is not implicated in any wrong."

"It must be, as he says, only a passing illness—some fever, due to the malaria of the place in which he lived. Perhaps it will wear itself out."

"I hope so. With all my heart, I hope so," replied Lena; but in her heart she knew the hope to be vain.

They entered the synagogue and ascended to the little gallery reserved for women. Lena's thoughts went back to the old days of poverty and privation, when she and Isaac had no secrets from each other; when their greatest trouble was how to procure their next meal. It was all changed now. How gladly she would have shared his sorrow, if he had allowed it; but she had in vain employed all her tact to learn his secret and knew no longer how to act. As she looked down upon this concourse of pious men, the thought that her husband was not among them, that he had become a pervert from Judaism, had fallen from his beautiful and God-inspired religion, brought a feeling of anguish to her soul, and she wept. Bertha, after vainly trying to comfort her, sympathetically wept too.

Ten days later was the Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement—the day on which each individual searches



in the deepest recesses of his own soul and cleanses himself of all evil and corruption. A wonderful day, truly, on which the devout Jew steps before his Maker, remorsefully confesses his sins, and, under a sincere promise of improvement and a resolution to avoid the misdeeds of the past, craves the Almighty's pardon. For the Jew there can be no vicarious atonement. Each contrite soul becomes its own redeemer. It is a great, a solemn day in Israel.

"Lena, dear, I will go with you to the synagogue," said Isaac, on Yom Kippur eve.

Lena's heart bounded with joy. She kissed her husband, as one would a dutiful child.

"Oh, dearest, I cannot tell you how happy I am!" she said; for she foresaw in her husband's conversion the beginning of better things.

The store was closed betimes, a bountiful feast was partaken of, preparatory to the long fast on the morrow, and Schwartz, with his wife and sister, walked silently and solemnly to the house of worship.

A dull, unyielding sorrow tugged at the poor man's heart. It was just a year since he had taken another's life, and every detail of that night lived vividly in his recollection. Friends met each other at the door of the synagogue and asked forgiveness for the wrong they had done one another. It is a beautiful custom, which demands that the worshiper be at peace with all mankind before he makes peace with his God. Isaac passed these groups indifferently. He had no forgiveness to ask of them; he had done them no harm. The only person he had wronged was cold and dead, and could

not forgive. He strode up to his pew, scarcely observing the nods of recognition of his many acquaintances. He felt completely isolated from mankind, an outcast in the midst of them.

The services began. The reader chanted the Hebrew prayers in a sing-song, monotonous fashion. Suddenly the mystically melodious tones of the "Kol Nidre" floated through the synagogue. It is a strange, weird song of touching harmony and tearful pathos, a song which portrays, as never song portrayed before, the persecution, the misery, the passion, the hope, the humility of the Hebrews. It is sung but once a year, on the Yom Kippur eve, and its sad measures attune the sin-encrusted heart to repentance. It swept Isaac's soul with a powerful touch. It rang into his ears like the voice of an accusing angel. It opened his mental vision and lifted the veil of the hideous past. In the trouble of his spirit Isaac looked up from his prayer book and gazed vacantly about him. He seemed to observe, for the first time, that the little synagogue was filled with men, and each of them, but himself, wore a praying scarf. He looked at his neighbor, who had on a "Tallith," the neck of which was embroidered with a band of tarnished gold braid. To Isaac's fevered imagination it seemed to be bordered with blood. His mind reverted to Sweeny, as he had seen him last, lying upon the floor, with the torn scarf bound about his bleeding temple.

What a strange fancy! He finds himself back again in the little western cabin, re-enacting the drama of that awful night. One by one the events crowd back

upon his memory with the vividness of reality. Again he sees Sweeny staggering into the cabin intoxicated; he hears his curses and hideous oaths, his accusations and unfounded denunciations. He sees him pull the sacred Tallith from his person and vent his spite upon it by tearing it into shreds. He feels the brute's powerful and relentless grip upon his arm; he struggles with the drunkard; he upbraids him; he strikes him with the pick. Horrors! he has killed him! There lies the corpse, a mouldering mass of corruption. No; it arises! This is not Sweeny, but some horrible spectre, some fiend of fearful aspect, approaching to accuse Isaac of the murder. The apparition advances towards the unfortunate man. It seizes him by the throat and seeks to choke him into insensibility.

"Help, help!" shrieked Isaac, in his delirium. "Take him away! I am innocent! I did not mean to do it!"

Isaac had screamed aloud, as he struggled to release himself from the horrid grasp of the apparition. There was an indescribable commotion in the synagogue. Lena, from her seat in the gallery, had seen her husband reel and sway, as though battling with an invisible foe. She heard his scream of terror and saw him fall heavily to the floor. The "Kol Nidre" came to a sudden and premature end, and a number of sympathetic friends crowded around the stricken man.

"He has swooned," said one. "Take him out into the cool air."

"It is hot enough in here to make anybody faint," said another.

"He has over-exerted himself," cried a third. "I told him but recently that he was working too hard."

The services were interrupted while they carried him out into the vestibule, where Lena and Bertha, trembling and weeping, awaited his coming. After some moments he opened his eyes and appeared to have recovered.

"How are you, Isaac? Do you feel better?" asked his wife, anxiously.

He looked about him with a vacant stare and shuddered. The recollection of his frightful vision came back to him. Thank heaven, it was only a dream, a cheat of the senses.

"I am better, Lena," he murmured. "Let us go home."

Supported by his wife and sister, he tottered home, like an old, decrepit man.

"What happened to me, Lena?" he asked, in a faltering voice, as though dreading to know.

She told him how he had struggled and fallen.

"It must be my illness," he said, in a low voice. "It is an awful thing, but it will wear off in time."

Lena shook her head mournfully, but said nothing. She had her doubts—grave, terrible doubts. On their arrival at the house, Joe and Rose were brought down into the sitting-room, and their merry prattle and innocent play soon restored their father to his wonted spirits. He slept heavily, however, muttering and groaning in his sleep, and once he sat bolt upright in bed and shrieked in his dreams.

On the morrow he awoke feverish and tired.

"Shall I send for a doctor?" asked Lena.

"No, dear; I feel much better."

"Perhaps you had better not go to the synagogue. You might have a recurrence of yesterday's illness."

"No, Lena; that is over. It will not come back again. I shall go; I must pour out my heart to God. I have need of atonement; I have need of his mercy."

Together they went to the house of prayer. How crowded it was with fasting men and women! There was contrition in every heart, remorse in every countenance.

"Help us, O Lord, and forgive us, for we have sinned." The reader chanted the Hebrew prayers with his fine baritone voice, and the congregation responded, ruefully beating their breasts, sadly chastising their erring bodies. The holy scrolls were taken from the ark and appropriate portions read. Then the Haftarah, a chapter from Isaiah, was recited; and finally Rabbi Kauffman ascended to the pulpit and preached a discourse on the significance of the holy day. The Rabbi was not a particularly eloquent speaker, nor could he be accused of being an intellectual giant. There have been more capable theologians before and since. But he was a God-fearing man, who spoke with the conviction of sincere belief. He expounded Judaism from the utilitarian standpoint, believed in its lofty ideals and its messianic aims, but secretly chafed under forms which he considered obsolete. Without being very erudite, he was high-minded and tolerant, and made up in personal effort what he lacked in eloquence and power. He had a habit of talking at his congrega-

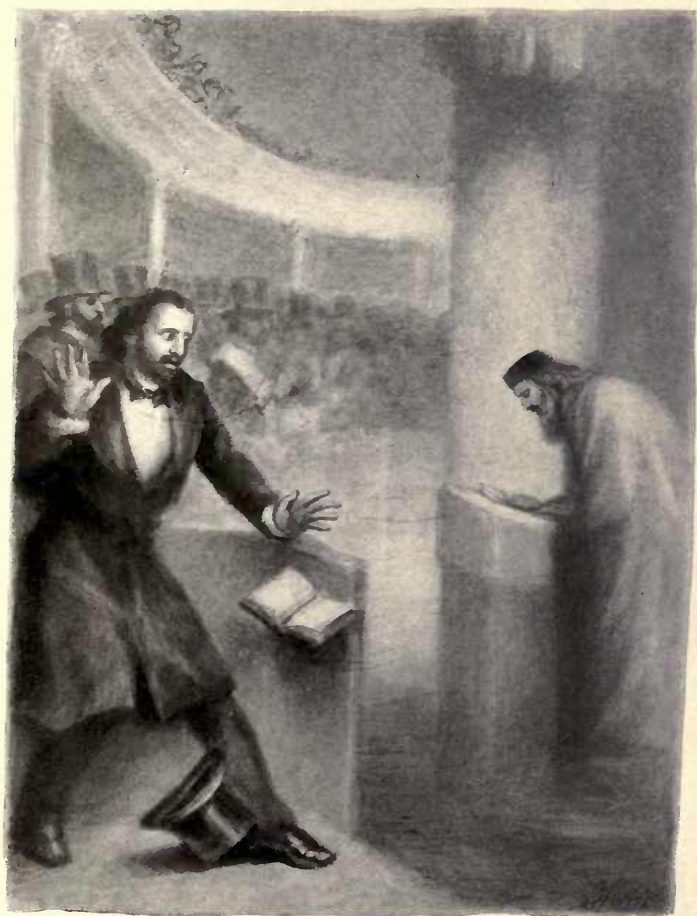


tion, so that every listener knew that he was meant, and took the lesson home to himself. The burden of his sermon was "Atonement."

"No sinner," he said, in the course of his remarks, "can hope for atonement unless it comes from and through himself. Each offender must bear the punishment of his own evil deeds; no one can bear it for him, or release him from its consequences. Man's liability to sin does not proceed from the fall of the first pair, as other creeds would have you believe. Judaism has ever taught that man is a free agent, with power to do wrong or to remain steadfastly upon the path of rectitude. That he errs is due to his environments and to the innumerable temptations which beset his life—temptations which are in no wise the special decrees of God or of the devil, but merely of man's own creation, and which he has the power to avoid.

"Having done wrong," he continued, "there are three steps which are essential to atonement. We must first confess to ourselves and to our God that we have sinned; we must, secondly, make every restitution in our power, for God will not forgive until we have obtained forgiveness from the victim we have wronged; and we must, lastly, promise sincerely and trustfully to avoid a repetition of our wrong. Having done this, we can step proudly to the throne of Jehovah and count upon his mercy.

"The key to the doctrine of atonement," continued the Rabbi, "is found in this passage of the Talmud: 'Transgressions between man and his neighbor, the day of the atonement will not wash away until the neighbor



“Help, help!” shrieked Isaac.



be reconciled.' (Mishna, chap. viii., sec. 9.) 'The calumniator must therefore first seek reconciliation with the person he has wronged. The thief must necessarily restore the stolen property before he can possibly hope for mercy.'"

So the Rabbi quoted the Talmud's views on every crime in the catalogue of human transgressions until he came to the greatest of all—homicide.

"I need scarcely speak of murder," he said, with a smile, "for we have no murderers among us. An Israelite may be misled into extortion or calumny; he may by force of circumstances even be tempted to commit theft; but, thank God, the annals of Israel show remarkably few murderers! An assassin can expect no atonement. There can be no restitution. Remorse cannot restore the life that has been wantonly destroyed. The soul has fled forever; the crime is beyond redemption. For the murderer there is no atonement."

Isaac, who had listened with painful interest, now writhed in agony upon his bench. His heart was bursting, his head was on fire. Deep into his heart burrowed the fatal words, "For the murderer there is no atonement." It was false! He was on the point of springing up and contradicting the preacher. What did these Rabbis know of God's divine will? They could only reason according to their own ideas of justice. What if they were wrong in their surmises, and God were more merciful than they?

Isaac sat with bowed head and closed eyes, so still that Mr. Rosenheim glanced at him uneasily, thinking he was asleep. He heard no more of the sermon; he

was too busy with his own wretched thoughts. He reviewed the various incidents of his crime, and sought to discover a palliating circumstance. Sweeny had been a bad man, that was certain. He himself had confessed how he had first beaten and then deserted his wife, and left her and her babe to the mercy of strangers. He had murdered a man, too, out of pure wantonness, and had eluded the punishment of his crime by breaking from jail. Had such a creature the right to live, to enjoy the blessings of earth? God knows what crimes this Sweeny might have committed had he continued in his corrupt career! When he was intoxicated the last vestige of a human being seemed to vanish, and he became a beast, capable of any atrocity. Was it a crime to kill an irresponsible brute, whose existence was apt to become a curse to the world? Were not scores of tigers and wolves slain for the mere fact that their fangs and claws were dangerous? And was a drunken, besotted, insane wretch better than a beast of the forest? No! Isaac had committed no wrong in ridding the earth of such a being. Rather was he entitled to the world's gratitude. God would surely view the matter in its proper light and be merciful.

"For the murderer there is no atonement." In spite of Schwartz's arguments, the words of the Rabbi still rankled in his memory, and their persistence overthrew all his hopes and theories.

Ah, but the Rabbi said nothing about killing a man in self-defence. That was surely a different matter from slaying a fellow-being in cold blood. Had not Sweeny threatened many a time to shoot him, his inoffending



partner? Had he not on one occasion sent a ball whizzing past his ear? On the fatal night had he not grasped Isaac's wrist with one hand, while he tried to draw his revolver with the other? It was but the work of a few seconds, and Isaac would have been among the dead. Was he wrong in seizing the first weapon he could find and using it in self-defence? Was not his life, on which depended the support of a wife and two innocent children, of more value than that of a scoundrel who had severed his ties with society and was at war with mankind? Assuredly God meant him to defend himself. The sudden inspiration to grasp the pick, the remarkable strength and precision with which he hurled it at his adversary, must have been given by God to serve a useful purpose. God meant him to be the instrument of his vengeance and to rid the world of this abomination.

"For the murderer there is no atonement." Still the words rang in his ear, but feebler than before. Reason was beginning to outweigh conscience. Isaac continued his musings.

"If my crime were discovered," he said to himself, "I could prove that I did the killing in self-defence; that Sweeny threatened my life, and that I employed the only means at hand to assure my safety. It was not a premeditated slaughter. In spite of his constant persecutions, I never meant to kill him. I fought heroically against every suggestion to rid myself of his company. There is no court of justice which, knowing the circumstances, would condemn me to death as a murderer. They might convict me of manslaughter,

and, at the worst, I would atone for my crime by a short term of imprisonment. But can bodily punishment, however severe, cleanse the conscience and wash away remorse? Can retribution on earth procure pardon for me in heaven? No doubt of it! God, who gave the criminal a city of refuge on earth, will not deny him absolution in the world to come. God cannot afford to be less merciful than man. It is incredible that God, who knows the circumstances of my crime, should show me no mercy, should hold out no hope of redemption. I'll not believe it. The Rabbis are but human, and judge from their own weak and selfish standpoint. God will be merciful. He will forgive!"

Plausible as Isaac's reasoning seemed, it did not entirely reassure him. The consciousness of his guilt pressed heavily upon him. He remembered that he had on many occasions wished for Sweeny's death. There was the money, too! Half of it belonged to him, by virtue of the labor expended upon it and the contract made with Sweeny. But the other half? To that he had no moral right. To murder he had added theft. Of a sudden he thought of Sweeny's wife and child, deserted and abandoned, destitute perhaps of the barest necessities of life, wandering as beggars over the surface of the earth. They were perhaps anxiously awaiting the return of a repentant husband and provider, little dreaming that he lay cold and dead in the Far West. Isaac shuddered at the mental picture he had invoked. What was the poverty he had endured, compared with the inexpressible misery this family might be doomed to experience?

"Oh, if I had but left half of the gold," sighed the harassed culprit, "it might have eventually found its way to the family of the deceased. And yet, if I had left it, some of the members of the gang might have come back and discovered it; or a strange miner might have found and appropriated it. Surely I had a better right to it than they. It was of no use to Sweeny's stiffening clay, while to me it was a fortune. It was mine! I had a right to take it, for want of a better owner."

The sermon was long since over. The reader was again chanting the prayers. Isaac saw and heard nothing. He sat as rigid as a statue, with his head buried in his palms, busy with his own thoughts. Morning had waned; the afternoon prayers had begun. The worshipers became restless under the influence of the lengthy service, the oppressive heat and their prolonged fast. Many left their seats and wandered into the cool vestibule for a breath of fresh air. Here they met acquaintances, and after asking each other how they were fasting, and exchanging similar seasonable compliments, returned to their pews to continue their devotions. Little boys brought their parents lemons, symmetrically and artistically ornamented with cloves, the refreshing odor of which, by appealing to their olfactories, might neutralize their pangs of hunger. Men leaned over into the pews of their neighbors, and for a brief moment or two spoke in whispers of secular affairs. Over all there sounded the buzz of earnest prayer, interrupted at intervals by the deep voice of the Chazzan, who with voice and gesture appealed to the Almighty for clemency.

The impressive memorial service with its "Kaddisch" was followed by the monotonous evening service. Still Isaac stirred not. He might have been in a trance. At length, when the declining sun sent its slanting rays through the little windows of the synagogue, he lifted his head. The ray of light fell upon his haggard face, and lit it up with a strange gleam. Isaac's struggle had been long and severe. He had viewed his crime from every standpoint, and had endeavored to find a solution to the difficulty in which he found himself. At length he had made peace with himself and with his God. He had mapped out a plan of action, a mode of life, which would atone for his misdeeds. The money he had taken should prove a blessing not only to himself, but to all the world. He would be a help to the needy, a father to the orphan, a comforter to the oppressed. He would utilize his ill-gotten fortune to spread cheer and comfort. He would save many a human life from misery and woe, and thereby atone for the life he had ruthlessly destroyed. He would make an effort to look up Sweeny's family, and by restoring to them the half of the fortune rightfully belonging to them, he would make amends for his crime. He would be the means of bringing happiness and sunshine into this destitute and stricken family, and by his own ministrations compensate for the years of neglect they had experienced. Under the influence of his noble resolutions all his superstition seemed to have vanished, and given place to an abiding faith in the wisdom and mercy of God, and in the efficacy of good.



“Atonement ! I will find it before God and man !”  
he cried.

The tones of the Shofar sounded through the evening air. The Day of Days was at an end. Slowly the pious Hebrews wended their way homeward, happy in the belief of divine forgiveness. If Isaac was not as happy as they, he at least walked as firmly, as confidently ; for he had determined on great and noble things.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PHILANTHROPIST.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet, oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart?"—*Shakespeare.*

NEXT day Isaac called on Rabbi Kauffman. In his snug and comfortably furnished study, which Isaac well remembered, with numerous books scattered over the tables around him, sat this important person, engaged in preparing a sermon for the following Sabbath. His Saturday sermons were usually amplifications of some Torah text, or some allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures, plentifully interlarded with powerful appeals to the male portion of his congregation to honor the house of prayer with their presence. If the good Rabbi had one sorrow, it lay in the fact that his audience on Saturday mornings was recruited almost exclusively from the ranks of the women. The men were for the most part engaged in earning their daily bread, and the exigencies of their calling did not permit of rest on the Sabbath. The women, as we have seen, sat in the gallery, and the lower portion of the house of worship was usually a barren waste of empty benches,

which, from their very newness, were all the more conspicuous and disheartening to a minister whose duty it was to fill them. To be sure, he might always count on the presence of a few retired merchants and two or three ultra-pious men, who snatched a few hours from their business and hastened to the synagogue, only to hurry back to their shops when services were over. The Rabbi was obliged, to his intense disgust, to crane his neck and gaze upwards, in order that his voice might reach the greater portion of his hearers. It was the old story. He had preached against this indifference for years, but no one heard him except the regular habitués, and they could not profit by his exordiums.

He had just incorporated into the sermon before him a more than usually powerful appeal for a better observance of the Sabbath, and was reading it over, with a smile of satisfaction, when his wife announced Mr. Schwartz.

"Ah, welcome, my dear Schwartz!" he cried, rising and advancing to meet his guest. "I am delighted to see you."

His well-formed face, which beamed cheerfully from beneath a little velvet cap, gave evidence of his sincerity.

"You have just come in time," he said, when Isaac had taken a chair, "to hear what I have written. In fact, I was thinking of you when I wrote it."

"Indeed, you do me honor," replied the visitor.

"Not at all; just the opposite. You shall see," and he proceeded to read his most recent composition. "There," he said, pushing up his spectacles, "that is

meant for you, Mr. Schwartz. A few years ago you were a regular attendant, and there was none more interested than you in the minute observance of every Jewish ceremonial. Since you have returned from your Western trip, however, you appear to have deserted us entirely. What excuse have you to offer, Mr. Schwartz?"

The Rabbi looked at his guest, with a twinkle in his merry eye.

"None, except unpardonable negligence," replied Isaac.

"Well, since you have heard my sermon and admitted your fault, let us dismiss the subject. Tell what brings you to me."

"Precisely the subject on which you have just lectured me. I want to confess my error and promise reparation."

"You mean—"

"I mean that for a year or more I had almost forgotten that I was a Jew, but that I now return to the fold repentant."

The Rabbi shook his guest heartily by the hand.

"I am surprised at but one thing—namely, that one who had been so devout should have become so indifferent. Is it possible that a few months in the West—"

"A few months in the West, Rabbi, will do a great deal towards eradicating the little religion one possesses. I endeavored to retain my fervor and love for my faith, and succeeded. One day, however, a crime was committed—" Here Isaac's voice became husky and he held to the chair for support. "A crime was commit-

ted," he repeated, tremulously. "A man was killed. It gave me a shock such as I never experienced, and I lost what faith I had in the divine wisdom which is supposed to rule over the universe. I have been a changed man since that day. I doubted the justice, the existence even of God."

"And have you been cured of your unbelief?"

"In a measure. I thought over the matter seriously at the synagogue yesterday, and came to the conclusion that God is merciful, although his ways may be mysterious. I am heartily ashamed of my indifference during the past year, and will endeavor to make amends."

"Amen. God strengthen you in your resolution," replied the Rabbi.

"You can do much to strengthen me in it. Let us come together more frequently. Let me share your friendship."

"Have I not always been your friend," said the good man—"in adversity and in prosperity?"

"Indeed you have," said Isaac, cordially, shaking the other's hand. "To whom but to you do I owe my present happiness?" When he spoke of his happiness he felt as though his heart would break with anguish, but he bit his lip and repressed his emotions. "I need more than a friend; I need a counselor, an adviser," he continued.

For an instant he thought of confessing his secret to the Rabbi; but cowardice forbade the step and buried it deeper within his soul.

"I do not understand," said the Rabbi, surprised.

"There was a time," answered Isaac, "when I read the Talmud and loved its wise precepts. A group of devout men met weekly at my father's house and discussed the meaning of the wondrous commentaries, the works of Israel's great Rabbis. Unfortunately I did not pay as much attention to these studies as I should have done. I find I have forgotten much of the little I learned in my youth. The Talmud, which I remember but vaguely, appears to me but sophistry and idle speculation."

"That is because you fail to comprehend the work. So deep and philosophic a treatise requires for its comprehension a mind attuned to its beauties and alive to its inspirations."

"And yet it contains much which to our American way of thinking seems utterly trivial and inconsistent."

"Nevertheless it is a wonderful storehouse of wisdom and learning."

"I should like to come together with you, Rabbi, and with other pious Israelites and re-read the Talmud in the light of our present surroundings. I might profit spiritually by such a course."

"No doubt of it. I am glad you suggest the step, for the same idea has presented itself to me. Let us devote every Thursday evening of the week to the pious work. Others will join us when they hear of the undertaking."

Isaac smiled gratefully. The poor man dared not confess that his one object in examining the Talmud was to find an extenuating chapter to fit his crime—a grain of comfort for his oppressed soul.



"There is another thing, Rabbi," said Isaac. "I am wealthy now, and prosperous. When I was poor I came to you, and you gave me aid. Without your assistance, I would perhaps never have reached the gold fields. I come now to place my wealth at your disposal. The fortune I brought with me was wrested from the rocks by laborious toil; it was watered with the tears of sorrow and pain. I mean to use it to alleviate pain and sorrow. One tenth of my possessions and one tenth of my gains, from now on, are to be devoted to the needy. Your position brings you in contact with poverty and misery. Send all applicants for charity to me. I will do all in my power to relieve their wants."

The Rabbi stood speechless with surprise. Then he stammered his appreciation of the noble offer.

"It is nothing," replied Isaac, humbly. "My gold has caused me many a pang, many a tear. Hitherto I have used it selfishly, and it has been a curse. If I now do good with it, I confess there is a selfish motive underlying my action; I wish to ease my mind of the burden this wealth has imposed."

"Who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord," said the Rabbi, joyfully. "May the God of Israel prosper you!"

Isaac felt childishly happy when he left the Rabbi's house. He stopped at a stationer's and bought a large ledger. With this he hurried to his store and with pen and ink inscribed on its cover the Hebrew word "Maaser" (tithes). Herein was to be entered the tenth part of all his profits for the benefit of the needy. It

was a Biblical custom his father had observed ; so would he. Then he went home to Lena, and, affectionately taking her hand, he told her of the noble projects which stirred within his breast.

He told her nothing of his crime, he lacked the courage to do this ; but laid stress upon the welcome fact that he meant to do away with trouble and fretting, lead a religious life and devote his growing fortune to deeds of charity.

Lena wept for sheer happiness. The world wore a brighter aspect for her, and, like a sun gilding the landscape with glory, joy seemed to dawn and give promise of a new existence. After the first transports were over, the good woman asked her husband to begin his charities at once by giving her ten dollars for a poor woman who was at that moment bewailing her cruel lot in the kitchen.

Bertha, too, shared in the general rejoicing, and on declaring, with a smile, that she was too poor to buy certain indispensable articles of toilet, she immediately found herself the possessor of a bank-note which would satisfy her wants for some time to come. Isaac next returned to his store, where the agile little milliners were ruining their eyes over his work, and surprised them almost into hysterics by voluntarily raising their wages.

The charity which he thus inaugurated at home did not remain there, but spread its blessed wings over the entire city. The Hebrew Relief Society was one of his first beneficiaries, and as it was in an impoverished condition, it did not refuse his proffered help. To his synagogue he devoted a generous sum.

Mr. Ehrlich, who had a number of important improvements in contemplation, went personally to see Mr. Schwartz and express his gratitude. Having acquitted himself of that pleasant duty, he remained until late in the evening discussing Schiller with Miss Bertha, for it was but natural that the gratitude he felt for the brother should in some way also include the sister.

Schwartz next joined every lodge and society in town which was in any way connected with the amelioration of the condition of the poor. It was in secret, however, that he did most good. There were a dozen indigent widows upon his private list who received a weekly stipend, and who never guessed the identity of their benefactor. Lena, who heartily seconded her husband's works, spent whole days in visiting the sick and unfortunate, and baskets of wine and delicacies invariably accompanied her. It was a labor she delighted in.

Not a Jewish emigrant arrived in town who did not in some mysterious manner find his way to Isaac's house, and not one appealed to his generosity in vain. The State was soon swarming with peddlers, fitted out with their stock-in-trade from Schwartz's purse. Poverty seemed to have vanished from among the Jews.

He made a strenuous effort to locate Sweeny's family; wrote to the mayors of various cities and scanned the lists of inmates of all the poorhouses and asylums in the land; but in this direction his labors proved futile.

He lived in a veritable whirlwind of good deeds, toiling and giving for the pleasure it afforded him and for the peace of mind he hoped to derive from it. The

blessings so lavishly bestowed returned to him a hundred fold. So rapidly did his wealth accumulate, that he often shuddered at the thought of a sudden and awful reaction. Like Polycrates, he feared the resentment of a power jealous of his success. He argued, in fear and trepidation, that prosperity based upon so corrupt a beginning could not endure, and though the possession of money made him miserable, he dreaded, nevertheless, to awake and find his fortune vanished and himself the shiftless Shlemiel that he was in the beginning.

His luck was marvelous. There came to him one day a man who had lost his wealth through unfortunate speculation. Of all his possessions there remained but a piece of land, an arid waste of clay, several acres in extent, and some distance outside of the city limits. His chances for a new start in life depended upon the sale of this land, but unfortunately he could find no purchaser for it. In his despair he appealed to Schwartz.

“And how much will see you out of your difficulty, my friend?” asked Isaac.

The man named his price—a considerable figure—and Isaac, without a word, drew his check for the amount.

“God bless you!” cried the man, endeavoring in his gratitude to kiss his benefactor’s hand.

The money meant life, honor and happiness to him. The deeds of transfer were promptly drawn and Isaac entered the amount in his charity ledger. A month later a new railroad was projected, and this very land was eagerly sought as the most convenient location for

the company's shops. A sum which appeared fabulous was offered for it, and Isaac accepted it. True to his principles, however, one tenth of the advance in value was promptly but anonymously sent to the original owner of the property.

Alas ! Isaac was mistaken if he hoped to find atonement in charity. His bright hopes of divine forgiveness with which he beguiled himself on Yom Kippur eve seemed to have no foundation, save in his own sanguine mind. When there was nothing to give and nothing to do, he paid the penalty of his momentary pleasure in long fits of melancholy. He was not sufficiently philosophical to rejoice at his success. Happy as his benevolence made him, he was as frequently despondent. Oh, if he could but buy forgetfulness as easily as he bought the gratitude of his people ! If he could but exorcise that apparition of a murdered man and send it back into the realms of oblivion ! In whatever he undertook, in whatever work of charity he was engaged, the mocking spectre stood at his side and poisoned the very good he sought to accomplish.

"Do you think by this to atone for the crime of murder ?" The taunting accusation rang incessantly in his ears. He was tormented by night as well as by day, and his dreams revolved about the one bloody pivot. He would often start from his sleep and scream with terror. For fear that Lena might discover his carefully guarded secret, from his somnambulistic utterances, he eventually occupied a separate room on the top floor of his dwelling.

In the hope of finding peace of soul, Isaac again turned



to religion. No longer in the mystic rites of Teph-illim and Messussoth and the devout observance of the dietary laws—he had neglected them too long to think of reviving them—but in an endeavor to fathom the mysteries of his creed and to find, if possible, spiritual consolation in the Torah and Talmud. He had no objections to his wife continuing to observe the ceremonies as of old relating to the table and the holidays; but as for himself, by a strange fancy, he chose to forget his orthodoxy of former days.

The arrangement made with his friend the Rabbi for a weekly study of the Talmud was faithfully carried out, but received a sudden and fatal set-back in a peculiar and unexpected manner. Attracted by the prospect of an occasional evening agreeably spent, a number of congenial acquaintances met in the minister's study and there discussed the Talmud in its relations to God and man, in imitation of the Rabbis of old—those worthy masters, whose unselfish labors and philosophical minds handed down to us the best thoughts of Israel, and who, in the midst of persecution, kept alive the soul of their race and preserved its heritage unsullied.

That the men who assembled weekly at Mr. Kauffman's resembled the masterful Rabbis of Talmudic days, either spiritually or physically, no one will venture to assert. It was undeniably a peculiar assembly, but its members were prepared to work with a vim under Mr. Kauffman's able guidance.

First and foremost came the parochial president, Mr. Rosenheim, whose intimacy with the Talmud had degenerated, as we have seen, into positive familiarity.

To have left him out of these gatherings would have been an insult to his position, as well as to his wondrous knowledge of the context of the Babylonian tomes. He could now, without fear of a misquotation, ask "Vot does de Talmud say?" and regale his listeners with the actual words in the holy tongue. He even presumed so far, on rare occasions, as to correct the Rabbi. This was not done in a spirit of criticism, but merely to show that the subject was not a sealed book to him.

Mr. Levi Rindskopf, the second of the group, was a very old-fashioned man, bent double with rheumatism, over whose gray head sixty unsuccessful years had passed. He was a watchmaker by trade, but was known as a profound student of Mishna and Gemara, and, if rumor did not lie, had in the old country been an expert dabbler in Kabbalah. He was a man of few words, but very pious, and no one could pray with greater unction or more persistently than he.

Meyer Marks, the next member, was a man of more than ordinary utility in the community, for he was the "Schochet," the butcher who slaughtered the cattle intended for Jewish tables according to prescribed rites; and watched conscientiously for any signs in lung or intestine that would render the carcass unfit for food. As behooves a man of his sacred calling, he was pious and uncompromising in all things pertaining to the ritual.

Moses Manheim, the Chassan or reader of the congregation, lent the Talmud class dignity and learning. He was a close student of Hebrew literature, and a deep thinker. Mr. Schwartz and the Rabbi completed the little circle.

Mr. Bergthal had eagerly applied for admittance, for he could not endure the idea of his rival in business pushing ahead of him spiritually ; but Mr. Rosenheim, with less charity and unselfishness than the Rabbis of old, threatened to retire if his competitor became one of the chosen few, for, as he wisely remarked, "One cloding man at a time is all de Talmud can stand !" Bergthal, in retaliation, set about forming a class in English literature ; but alas, the project came to grief after the first meeting, for the projector's English was so peculiar and unconventional, that the invited members, fearing to unlearn what little they knew, decided not to launch out on unknown waters.

The Talmud lessons were conducted on strictly informal lines. The Rabbi would read a section and expound it to the best of his understanding, and each member was privileged to ask any question or suggest any explanation.

Poor Isaac was doomed to disappointment from the outset. The great book in which he had formerly gloried now appeared to his agitated mind and fevered imagination but a collection of metaphors and metaphysical discussions, in which he sought in vain for a glimmer of reason. He came with a heart full of unspeakable sorrow. Why had these subtle reasoners of a bygone age no consolation for him ? Why did they not proclaim God's mercy in unmistakable terms, and say that while man might err, God would be sure to forgive ? Occasionally there was a chapter to fit the case, but, as a rule, there were disputations without end, and on subjects in which the practical business man could have no

interest whatever. Why, a whole evening was spent in reading and discussing the opinions of these worthy Talmudists upon the propriety of eating an egg laid upon the Sabbath or a holiday! Another evening was devoted to an extravagant discussion of the extent of paradise and the dimensions of Gehenna. When at times some really beautiful chapter of the Mishna was considered, the commentators had managed to twist it into such obscure allegory, that the clear and concise meaning of the subject was utterly lost in a maze of useless words.

Rabbi Kauffman was well versed in Talmud, and we will do him the justice to say he believed it to be a God-inspired work. So had Isaac believed once upon a time, but that was all over now. He reproached himself bitterly because he could no longer take an interest in what Rabbi Hillel or Rabbi Schammai said. Had he become so indifferent to his faith, or perhaps so wrapped up in business, as to be unable to appreciate a noble and philosophical thought? Had his association with common-sense American customs rendered his mind too obtuse to grasp these Oriental subtleties? There is no doubt that each of these circumstances added their influence, but greater than all was the recollection of his crime. He could derive no pleasure from these abstract reasonings, with the certainty of his guilt ever before his eyes. He hoped to find some passage which promised him absolution and grace. He knew that the Talmud must be teeming with consolatory doctrines, but he lacked the patience to wait until such passages should come up for discussion. All that did

not directly or indirectly apply to his case appeared irrelevant and absurd.

The discussion one evening, starting from a disputed point on ethics, soon assumed a direction which became interesting to Schwartz.

"While it is impossible to legislate for all times and places," said the Rabbi, in the course of an argument, "there are certain well-defined principles of morality which apply to all nations. To transgress these argues lack of character and a disposition to evil."

"A man may have the most moral of characters," said Schwartz, "and still on occasion do a wrong. He may have the best of resolutions, and still be led into acts at variance with them. We are sometimes ruled by circumstances which we can neither foresee nor avoid."

"Possibly," replied the Rabbi, who, though tolerant, was so rigid in his own actions as to look with horror on every wrong in others; "but a man must be predisposed to evil to fall an easy prey to circumstances. A soul of absolute rectitude will rise superior to circumstances."

"We know," suggested Mr. Manheim, "that opportunity makes the thief."

"True," said the minister; "without the opportunity he could not have become a thief; but the germs of thievery, if I may use such an unusual expression, must have lain dormant in his nature, or opportunity would have left him untouched."

Schwartz shook his head in dissent, and was silent for a moment. Presently he said, in an excited manner:



"You surely don't consider a person who has honestly fought against temptation, and has fallen nevertheless, as bad as one who has made no effort at all."

"Not quite," said the minister. "I may pity him, perhaps, but the consequences are pitiless. Our deeds bear their reward or punishment, regardless of the secret struggle that preceded them. The law takes note of the crime and the motives that led up to it, but does not concern itself with the doubts, resolutions and excuses which the criminal may have indulged in before he committed the act. But, my dear Mr. Schwartz, you certainly can have nothing to gain by pleading in favor of crime, for to a man as inflexible in morals as you are all evil must be abhorrent."

The Rabbi looked straight at Schwartz over his spectacles as he said this, with an air of friendly interest, which to the other appeared as undoubted suspicion.

He became very pale and gasped for breath; but, recovering, he replied, as calmly as possible:

"Because I strive to do right does not make me less tolerant to the faults of others, and knowing how easily men may yield to temptation, I like to speculate on the consequence of an unfortunate slip from the path of virtue. Let us go on with the reading."

The subject changed; but during the entire evening Schwartz was absent-minded and ill at ease.

On the fifth Talmudic evening the conversation accidentally referred to the crime of murder. At length Isaac's patience was to be rewarded. A passage was considered relating to the slaughter of animals for food.

Said Meyer Marks, the Schochet: "Our manner of

killing cattle is the most humane that can be devised. The knife employed must be sharp and without a flaw ; the cutting must be done at a single stroke across the windpipe and arteries of the throat. In this way the principal blood-vessels are severed, and the animal expires before any pain has been felt. It is a well-known fact that if a cut is inflicted with a sharp knife the pain is insignificant. Besides, the blood, that great vehicle of disease germs, is rapidly drained off. I have seen animals killed, according to the prevailing method of knocking them senseless, where several brutal blows were necessary to relieve the animal of its misery, while all the time the poor brute gave vent to its anguish in almost human groans."

"It strikes me," said Rindskopf, "as positively sinful to kill an animal at all. Who gives us the right to lay hands upon the meanest of God's creatures and deprive it of life?"

"Are you an apostle of vegetarianism, my friend?" asked the Rabbi, smiling. "Cattle were intended for food. God himself has so decreed it."

"Possibly. But considering the vast number of beasts killed in wanton sport, or slaughtered for their hides and allowed to rot on the field—is not that sinful?"

"You are right," interrupted Schwartz, with great animation. "I have seen on the Western plains thousands and thousands of buffaloes killed for the mere sport of seeing them struggle and die, and then left to putrefy in the sun."

Mr. Rindskopf, the student, whom the thought of

blood always caused to shiver, cried out, in indignation :

“Oh, it is horrible ! To kill a beast for wanton amusement is as cruel as killing a human being.”

The Rabbi held out his hand with a deprecating gesture.

“All the beasts of the field are not worth a human life,” he said. “The eradication of an entire species would be a cheap price to pay for the life of the most contemptible man on earth.”

“Still there are men everywhere—drunkards, libertines, thieves—whose life is a curse to humanity, and whose death would be a boon.”

It was Isaac who spoke, and his voice trembled with suppressed feeling.

“It is not for us to judge them worthy of death, or to mete them out their punishment,” said the Rabbi. “It is true, man is but an animal ; but he is formed in the image of God. He possesses a soul, breathed into him by his Creator. He who kills a man lays hands upon God, and for him there can be no forgiveness. Therefore has murder always been considered the most heinous of sins. The Jew has ever had a horror of wantonly shedding blood.”

Isaac had become pale as the Rabbi spoke, and could with difficulty repress his feelings. A storm of emotion swept through his soul. He sprang to his feet.

“And were a murderer to come to you and ask you what course to pursue in order that he might obtain peace of mind, what would you advise ? What consolation would you offer ?”

The Rabbi reflected a moment.

"I have little sympathy with a murderer," he answered. "I should advise him to deliver himself to the authorities and expiate his crime. I should tell him that only subsequent trials have the power to wash away his guilt."

"Your doctrine is absurd!" cried Isaac, a prey to violent agitation. "It is blasphemous! There may be different degrees of murder, and are they all to be judged alike? Does the law punish the thief who steals a loaf of bread to allay his hunger with the same severity as one who has robbed the widow and the orphan? A man may be goaded to murder by persecutions and injuries; he may be driven to it by self-defence; he may commit the crime in a moment of madness. Do you mean to say that for all of these cases he merits the same punishment on earth and the same misery hereafter as in the case of premeditated killing? It is absurd, I tell you; and to say that God has no pardon for a murderer is debasing Jehovah to the level of a cruel and vindictive judge."

"Friend Schwartz," said the Rabbi, surprised at the vehemence of Isaac's speech, "to judge by your agitation, one would imagine that you were a murderer, pleading for mercy. Is it possible that you are guilty of such a crime?"

The words were spoken in jest, but to Isaac they had a fearful significance. It was the second time the Rabbi had appeared to suspect him. He became livid and sank back into his chair. He looked piteously about him and wiped the cold perspiration from his brow.

"When I was in the West," he stammered, at length, "I saw a murder committed. It was done in self-defence; but the recollection of it has never left me by day or by night."

Schwartz hid his face in his hands and shuddered.

"We cannot evade God's commandments," said the Rabbi, gently, "without holding ourselves responsible for the results. I have often told you in my sermons that restitution is the prime essential of atonement. In the case of murder this is clearly impossible. Where the criminal delivers himself to the authorities and expiates his crime, he has in a measure atoned for his offence; and we, who believe in God's fatherly love, can confidently hold out the prospect of eventual pardon. But for the criminal who conceals his crime and evades its punishment, there can be no atonement, save that which may possibly come from a long life of remorse."

"Horrible doctrine!" cried Schwartz, upon whom the Rabbi's words made an indelible impression. "It cannot be as you say. You are judging God by your own ideas and by human standards."

"How else can we judge God," asked the Rabbi, "but by what we feel to be right and true? Justice remains justice, whether on earth or in heaven, and our ideas of justice have been implanted by God himself."

Had Isaac been less moved and more amenable to reason, he would have learned from the Rabbi that this doctrine of retribution applied only to willful murder, with malice aforethought, but that killing in self-defence, or as a result of accident, was dealt with very gently by Jewish law. Indeed, the very next lesson in



the Talmud would have elucidated much that was dark to the unhappy merchant ; but that next chapter Isaac never learned. He had lost all hope of finding a balm for his wounds in the venerable Rabbinical tomes.

It was evident that he dared not again discuss the subject with his friends, for he perceived that he was not master of his emotions, and that a moment of agitation might betray him. His visits to the Rabbi's house were therefore discontinued, and Isaac felt a growing repugnance towards the Talmud, which he so utterly failed to understand.

The charity which he spread with lavish hand became mechanical in the course of time, and failed to give him the pleasurable excitement he craved. His morose and gloomy disposition was constantly exerting itself. He was still reveling in the possession of Sweeny's half of the fortune, to which he had no moral right whatever. His endeavors to find Dick's family had remained fruitless. One day, while brooding over the matter, he was inspired by a sudden idea. Sweeny had been a Catholic. If the dead man's family could not enjoy the possession of his share, it should at least go to Catholic charities.

When once an idea took possession of his brain, it grew until it drove out all other thoughts and left him no peace of mind until it was carried into execution. For a day and a night he reflected how best to realize his new project, and ended by putting on his hat and paying a visit to Father Kelly, an influential priest, the head of the Church of St. Lawrence.

Father Kelly was a worthy man, endowed with a

passionate nature, a fertile imagination, and an overwhelming love for his religion. His contemplative mind led him to look upon religion as the greatest factor in life, without which there could be no happiness here or in the hereafter. He was a man of profound and immutable convictions, prominent among which was, naturally enough, the belief that his church alone held the key to salvation. In spite of this doctrine he associated freely with men of opposite opinions, made friends with people of all shades of belief, and was esteemed by all who knew him as an honorable and upright representative of God on earth. He delighted in argument and controversy, and was thoroughly content only when trying to convince a skeptic of the superiority of his doctrines. To give up discussion and disputation would have deprived life of its principal charm.

The priest was at home in the parochial dwelling in the rear of the church. He occupied a charming room, with a projecting bay window looking out upon a delightful stretch of green lawn and cheerful flowers. The low bookcase, well filled with ecclesiastical works; the oak centre table, with its large nosegay of flowers, a daily offering from some kindly disposed parishioner; the shrilly warbling canary hanging near the window, and the numerous highly colored reprints of sacred pictures on the walls, all lent an air of comfort to the spacious apartment and threw a ray of cheer into Isaac's heart. He felt as though it were pleasant to be there. There was none of that sordid contraction which hemmed in Rabbi Kauffman's study.

Father Kelly was not a little surprised at receiving such an unexpected caller.

"To what may I attribute the honor of your visit?" he asked, placing a chair for his guest.

"I come to you in reference to some plans which have occurred to me recently. Your reverence has doubtless many applications for charity?"

The priest smiled at the question.

"More than we can relieve, Mr. Schwartz. The poor we have always with us, and the little money we receive from the charitably inclined scarcely suffices for our most pressing needs."

"But you have many wealthy adherents to your church?"

"This is a selfish age," replied the priest, "and the demands of one's family and business are such as to leave little for the poor. Nevertheless there are many liberal givers in my flock—people who make use of their wealth for the purpose of alleviating the distress of others. We need more people like yourself, Mr. Schwartz, for you make charity the aim of your life."

Schwartz reddened at the compliment and tried to disclaim any credit.

"Oh, no!" said the priest; "it won't do to be too modest. The reports of your philanthropy have long ago reached my ears, and I have observed with pleasure the judicious employment you have made of your money."

"It is upon that very subject that I came to speak," replied Isaac, taking a seat at the priest's solicitation. "I owe my start in life to a Catholic. He and I worked

together in the gold fields, and partially through his labors I was enabled to return home richer than I went away."

Isaac paused to compose his mind. He could never allude to his association with Sweeny without experiencing an uncontrollable nervousness which made speech difficult. After a moment he continued more calmly :

"Hitherto I have given principally to Jewish charities. I now feel a desire to do something for the poor of my partner's denomination, and I therefore come to you as the most fitting person to assist me."

The priest rose and seized Schwartz's hand.

"How can I thank you, noblest of men?" he cried. "How can I requite such disinterested generosity?"

"How? I will tell you. By employing the money to the best advantage, and by teaching henceforth that the Jew is not as bad as he is represented to be."

"I have always taught that," answered the priest. "I have always said that if the Jews but recognized the Son of God, they would make the most excellent Catholics the world has ever seen."

Isaac smiled faintly. "This little difference of doctrine, however, need not keep us apart," he said.

"As to the money," replied Father Kelly, "you may rely upon me to spend it to the best advantage."

"I have confidence in you," replied Schwartz, taking a paper from his pocket. "Here is a check for one thousand dollars. When this is all spent, you may come to me for more."

"This is munificent beyond words," cried the overjoyed priest, as his eyes beheld the amount. "What



good can I not accomplish with this fortune? But surely it cannot be your desire to allow me to dispose of so much money according to my own pleasure. Would it not be better for you to decide how it is to be spent?"

"No, my friend! I have my business to attend to. With your permission, however, I will call from time to time, and together we may devise some schemes for alleviating the condition of our needy fellow-men."

"You will always be welcome at my house," replied the priest, heartily; "I shall feel honored by your visits."

"What a pity he is a Jew," he cried, at length, after Isaac's departure. "Such a man would be a credit to our holy church."



## CHAPTER X.

### THE CANDIDATE.

“ Oh, that the slave had forty thousand lives!  
One is too poor, too weak, for my revenge.”

—*Shakespeare.*

MR. BERGTHAL was standing at the door of his Mammoth Clothing Emporium in his shirt-sleeves, contentedly puffing a cigar, when fate led Mr. Jeremiah Logan down the street and into his presence. Mr. Logan was a well known saloon-keeper in the ward, and a prominent candidate for the office of alderman. He was a tall, thin personality, with a bristly red moustache and a sinister gray eye; a man of few words, but of great influence. Mr. Logan was a popular man with himself and with the ward-heelers, and there was little doubt of his election.

“ Goot mornin', Misther Logan,” said Bergthal, affably, as the great man passed. “ Ish der noddin' you vas vanting' in cloding ? ”

This was Mr. Bergthal's stereotype salutation, and was always reinforced by an appealing and insinuating gesture with both hands. It brought many a patron to his shop. On this morning, too, it proved efficacious. Mr. Logan checked his onward march, reflected for a moment, and then said :

"Have you anything decent in the way of an overcoat?"

"Obergoat?" repeated the merchant, as an ecstatic expression spread over his features. "I haf of obergoats der finest assortment outside of New York. I haf a goat vot's der finest imported beaver, und I sold him to you cheap."

"I was on my way to Rosenheim's," said Mr. Logan; "but if you can suit me, I'd just as soon give you my trade, and buy the coat from you."

The name of Rosenheim acted on Bergthal like a red flag on a bull. His face grew flushed and he sniffed contemptuously.

"Rosenheim? Vy should you vant to go dere to be cheated? Cum right in here. I'll sold you for helluf vot Rosenheim sharge. Cum in, Mr. Logan. Dry dis obergoat on. Dot's a fine shinshilla, geline mit der best mohair."

"What's mohair?" asked Mr. Logan, who was better informed about the different varieties of liquor than about textile fabrics.

"Mohair," explained the merchant, "vas called mohair because it from der hair of der animal called der Mo vas made."

"I never heard of such an animal," said the embryonic alderman, dubiously.

"I pelief dot," replied the other, "dot animal runs vild on der mountains of Asia und Africa. Id don'd never vas caught yet alretty. It runs der bushes droo, und some of der hair ketches on der twigs und vas pulled out. Der natives gollect dot

hair, und dot makes mohair. Ya, dot's very expensive stuff."

The overcoat was tried on, and Mr. Logan surveyed himself in the mirror. Beyond a grunt, which might have passed for satisfaction or the reverse, Mr. Logan said nothing.

"Dot's a goot fit, Mr. Logan. Yust der right size, don'd it? Shinshillas vas vorn a leedle big dis season. Ven you vas an alderman elected, you feel like a pigger man, und fill it oud more alretty."

"How much?" asked Mr. Logan, laconically, evidently well pleased with his reflection in the glass.

"T'irty dollars," replied the merchant, rubbing his hands ecstatically, as he surveyed Mr. Logan, and mentally deciding to accept fifteen, if he couldn't do better.

"Thirty dollars," repeated Mr. Logan, after an additional examination of his double in the mirror. "I think I'll take it."

Mr. Bergthal's eyes danced with delight. Such an easy customer was a rarity on Cedar Street. He felt sorry for Rosenheim.

"I'll keep it right on my back," continued the politician. "Then I'll be sure I am getting the same coat. Charge it up to me. I'll pay you next month."

Mr. Logan left the store with the overcoat on, and Mr. Bergthal sank upon a chair in a state of utter collapse. When a man is a candidate for office, his cash is mightier than his word. It was evident that Mr. Logan had planned some coup d'etat, else why should he be satisfied with the first coat he had put on? Why should he have omitted to haggle about the price? Why should

he have worn the coat when the atmosphere was sultry? Mr. Logan never intended to pay for his purchase. In a flash the tragic fact impressed itself forcibly upon Bergthal's brain.

"Mine Gott, I am ruined!" he cried, excitedly. "The man is a ganef (thief)." His first thought was to shout "Police," but he dismissed the idea as useless, for was not the future alderman a special protégé of the police?

The more the poor man reflected upon his misfortune, the more terrible it appeared. He brooded over it all day, declined to eat his meals, and passed a sleepless night. He sincerely wished he had allowed Rosenheim to make the sale. His greed in despoiling Rosenheim appeared as a heinous offence, and he vowed he would never be covetous again. Next morning, haggard and weary, he passed Logan's saloon. Mr. Logan was standing before the door, in converse with several of his constituents. One of them was saying, "Thot's a purty coat yez have on, Jerry, but it's too big for yez. Where did ye git it?"

"At Bergthal's," said Logan, curtly.

"Well, it's made for a bigger man than yerself. Thot Sheeny shtuck yez."

It was providential that Bergthal overheard the criticism.

"Goot-morning, Mr. Logan!" he said, sidling up timidly to the great politician. "How you vas this morning? Pooty goot, eh? Vy, dot obergoat vas for you two sizes too large alretty. I musht haf gave you der wrong goat to put on. No, sir-ee! I wouldn't let a goat like dot leaf my shtore. Id vould der reputation

of der Mammoth Cloding Emporium hurt. I got of der same goat a size schmaller. Cum 'round mit me und I gif you a better fit."

"Go along wid him, Jerry," said one of his henchmen. "Yez look like a fence-rail shtuck in a hogs-head. Let him give yez a smaller coat."

Thus urged, the unsuspecting Mr. Logan turned his steps into Cedar Street, and followed Mr. Bergthal into his store.

"Now took it off und dry dis goat on," said the merchant, blandly and benevolently.

Mr. Logan took off the garment and laid it on the table. Mr. Bergthal folded it up and put it back in stock.

"Now, Misther Logan," he said, with sundry vehement gestures, "dere vas der door. You dink you cheat me oud of an obergcoat, ain'd id? I guess not alretty. You pay for id in a mont', eh? Vot you t'ink I vas, Misther Logan? A baby or a fool? You're a 'ganef,' und der sooner you leaf der shtore der better. Go und buy from Rosenheim your clodings from now on alretty. I don'd vant your trade."

Mr. Logan was so surprised by this unexpected piece of diplomacy that he stood speechless and motionless. After recovering his breath, he tried to recover his property; but Mr. Bergthal stood with adamantine firmness and guarded the pile of overcoats with his excited little body.

"You'll be sorry for this, you scoundrel!" at length shouted the indignant candidate, as he left the store; but Bergthal stood erect in conscious pride before his



citadel, with a smile of triumph upon his expressive face.

If the merchant imagined that the affair would be thus easily settled, he was woefully mistaken. Mr. Logan was a power in the ward, and was not the man to allow his heart to be thus ruthlessly trampled upon and his back to be thus mercilessly despoiled of its covering. He planned a bitter revenge. He was politician enough to realize that any overt act against Bergthal would lose for him the Jewish vote, without which his chances of securing the aldermanic berth would be sensibly diminished. No candidate subscribes to the doctrine that "it is better to have run and lost than never to have run at all." He could take no chances. Fortunately, he had henchmen galore to do his bidding, and it fell to the lot of Jimmy Lawrence, a prize-fighter and much-dreaded tough, to carry out the meditated retaliation.

A few days later Jimmy Lawrence, accompanied by a formidable bull-pup, sauntered down Cedar Street, with blood in his eyes and war in his heart. He had formulated no definite plan of action, but he relied on chance to pick up a quarrel with the clothing merchant. Mr. Bergthal, all unconscious of the impending danger, was in his shop, striving to turn an honest dollar, and in the same operation to sell a pair of trousers whose pristine glory had long since succumbed to dust and the actinic action of the sun. Mr. Bergthal had a pet collie, a great favorite with his children, and this dog usually lay in the doorway, and when not asleep watched with the fidelity of Cerberus the wire forms,

artistically draped with garments and signs, that stood upon the sidewalk. The dog, whose Jewish name was Califf, lay in his accustomed spot across the threshold, basking in the sun, when Jimmy and his snarling companion sauntered upon the scene. "Sic him!" cried the prize-fighter; and in a second the pup had Califf by the neck, and the air was filled with canine howls and imprecations. Bergthal and his customer both ran to the door, the former in anticipation of trouble and the latter of sport. Both had their anticipations fulfilled. Poor Califf, bred to a life of inactivity and ease, was like a rat in the fierce jaws of the pup, and squealed with almost human persistence.

Thoroughly oblivious of personal danger, realizing only that his pet's career was in danger of abbreviation, Bergthal rashly threw himself into the *melée*, and endeavored to separate the combatants.

"Leave my dog alone, will yez?" shouted Jimmy, the tough, from the curb.

"Vell, den, call him quick away from my tog!" And Bergthal seized the pup by a leg in a vain endeavor to drag him off.

Here Jimmy took a hand in the battle, and grasping the clothing merchant by the coat collar, proceeded to belabor him with his brawny fists. Bergthal was no match for the professional pugilist, and he made up in lusty calls for assistance what he lacked in prowess. In an instant that particular locality on Cedar Street was alive with interested spectators. Mrs. Bergthal, who lived over the Emporium of Fashion, was attracted by the noise, and running to the door of the store, stood

for a moment in deep despair, crying, "Oh, woe is me! My husband! They will murder him!" Then, seeing that the situation was becoming critical, she ceased her wailing, and, like Rîzpah protecting her darlings from the eagles' ravages, she attacked Jimmy from the rear, beating him with a convenient coat-hanger. The excitement became indescribable. The street was divided between two rival camps, Celtic and Semitic, and their slogans, in their respective brogues, were awe-inspiring.

Mr. Ehrlich, whose place of business was near by, was startled by the din of battle, and rushed to the scene. With the instincts of a peacemaker, he tried to separate the combatants, and was severely bruised for his pains.

When a policeman finally appeared, his argus eye took in the situation at a glance, and, with rare impartiality and commendable perspicuity, he promptly arrested both Jimmy Lawrence and Jacob Bergthal for disturbing the peace. Followed by an enthusiastic crowd, the combatants were led into the august presence of Magistrate Flaherty, who, being a friend of the pugilist, dismissed him on his own recognizance, and held the merchant, in default of five hundred dollars bail, for trial.

That evening Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Logan were in the best of spirits, and the best of spirits were in them. Mr. Logan had obtained his revenge without prejudicing his chances of election by a loss of the Hebrew vote.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE NEW CREED.

"Must I consume my life, this little life,  
In guarding against all may make it less?  
It is not worth so much. It were to die  
Before my hour, to live in dread of death."

—*Byron.*

ISAAC returned home from the priest's with a smile of contentment upon his lips; but on his arrival at the house his happiness was rudely dispelled. A disagreeable surprise awaited him.

"My dear," said Lena, kissing him as he entered. "You have had a strange visitor. Who do you think was here?"

"How can I tell? Who was it?"

"Mr. Burrow, the sergeant of police."

Isaac's face became deathly pale, and he leaned against the wall for support.

"What did he want?" he gasped.

"I don't know. He wouldn't tell me his business, but he seemed anxious to see you. When I told him you were out, he said he would call after dinner."

"Was that all he said?" asked Isaac, nervously.

"Yes— No; he said I should be sure to keep you home until he came, as he must see you without fail."

Good God ! Then it had come at last—the dreaded exposure. He could no longer doubt it. The police were in possession of his secret and had come to arrest him. Isaac staggered into his parlor and sank into a chair, trembling with fear.

“Dear me!” cried Lena, “you look so pale. What is the matter?”

“It is nothing, Lena; only my old sickness. I cannot stand excitement. Tell me, did not Mr. Burrow say why he wanted to see me?”

“Not a word.”

“Have you no idea what he wanted?”

“None whatever. He seemed disturbed and in a hurry.”

“Disturbed and in a hurry,” murmured Isaac.

Beyond a doubt he had come to arrest the murderer. The poor man groped his way up to his room, holding on to the railing for fear of stumbling. He locked the door, for he wanted to be alone with his grief. Throwing himself upon his bed, he sobbed as if his heart would break.

“At last,” he murmured, “they have found me out. All my charity and all my endeavors to atone for my crime have been unavailing and will count as naught. They will tear me from my family and from my home, and lock me up in their prison until the day of execution. Not that, my God, not that!” he prayed. “Oh, have I not been punished enough? Must my family and my friends be punished with me? Oh, that there was a city of refuge to which to flee! My God, thou knowest I am no murderer—that it was done in self-defence!”



After a while he became calmer and sat down in a rocking chair, gazing vacantly into space.

"Perhaps it is a mistake, after all," he muttered, "and the police sergeant wanted me for something else. No, that is not likely. There can be but one solution to the question. I am to be arrested."

Isaac had reached a mental state when everything even remotely connected with his crime assumed an unnatural aspect of importance. He saw every occurrence exaggerated through a medium of excitement and terror. He was in a constant state of delirium, brought about through his fear of confession and dread of detection. The most insignificant event threw him into a state of mental unbalancement, during which it was impossible for him to reflect intelligently.

The perspiration stood upon his forehead as he thought of the months of imprisonment, the long trial, the probable hanging. His memory became confused, his ideas distorted. At the thought of an execution he sprang up and paced the room in feverish haste. He dug his finger-nails deep into his palms, but he felt them not. The hanging! It would kill Lena; she would not survive it.

"No, no," he cried, in despair, "they dare not hang me! It was done in self-defence. It was not premeditated murder."

Yet what proof had he? Who would believe him? A thought of flight suggested itself. He might evade the police and escape. Whither? Wherever he went they could bring him back, and his evasion would only be construed as an evidence of guilt. Besides, he could

not take Lena and the children with him, and he would not desert them. What if he called Lena and told her all, confessed his crime and implored her forgiveness? It would be better than if she heard the story from the police. Yes, he would do it. He felt he should have done it long ago. He went to the door to call his wife.

"Lena?" The name stuck in his throat. He called again, but his hoarse voice was scarcely audible. No, he dared not tell her. Time enough when she found it out. He staggered back into the room and fell into his chair, pale, irresolute.

An hour passed—an hour of intense anguish, of terrible suspense. Oh, if he could but die and be through with it all! His wife came up to call him for dinner, and found him sitting with his chin in his hands, staring dejectedly before him.

"Come, Isaac, dinner is ready."

"I cannot eat. I am not well. Leave me alone."

"No, my dear. You must eat. A nourishing dinner will do you good. We have your favorite dish to-day."

He went down to please her, but could eat nothing. His wife was greatly worried, but kept her peace. She was growing accustomed to his vagaries, but not reconciled to them. Another hour of suspense ensued, until two o'clock struck, when the door-bell rang and the sergeant of police entered. Isaac went into the hall to meet him.

"How are you, Mr. Schwartz?" asked the man in uniform. "I want you to do me the favor to go to the county prison with me?"

Isaac's eyes bulged from their sockets. There was no more doubt of his exposure.

"For what?" he managed to whisper, in a terrified voice.

"Great heavens, man, don't look so frightened! I don't intend to keep you there," said the official. "The case is just this. Mr. Bergthal, the clothing merchant, has been arrested for disturbing the peace and wants you to go on his bail. Hurry, for the poor fellow is growing impatient. He fears Mr. Rosenheim will get his trade while he is locked up."

Isaac clutched the wall to keep from falling. What a terrible mistake! They had not discovered his crime. Thank God, thank God! He actually wept for joy.

"Will you go with me?" asked the sergeant, surprised at such emotion.

"Of course I will; at once. I will get my hat."

In the excess of his agitation Isaac fell into a chair, and it was several minutes before he found strength to walk.

He went willingly to the jail with the sergeant and entered bail for Bergthal, who was profuse in his thanks and explanations.

"I vas sorry to drouble you, Mr. Schwartz," cried Bergthal, effusively, "aber dere vasn't nobody I couldn't sent to for bail. My friends don'd own no real estate, except Rosenheim, und he ain'd no friend of mine. Haf you heard how id vas? Dot rascal, Jimmy Lawrence, cums around mit his dog, vich grab my dog, und den he goes for me ven I go for his dog. It's nodding but 'rishus' (prejudice). I vill haf de law on dot tough, if it costed me my last cent."

Bergthal again expressed his gratitude and hastened back to the Mammoth Clothing Emporium, where he found his wife bathed in tears and mourning for him as though he were irretrievably lost, while Emma was using all her eloquence to comfort her bereaved parent.

Isaac shuddered as he passed through the dingy prison. The cells, with their iron gratings, seemed to beckon him in, and he glanced furtively into the interior. How long would it be before he was called upon to inhabit just such a cell? For the moment the danger was averted, but it was sure to come. Nemesis would overtake him, and one of these very cells, with its bare walls and carpetless floors, its gloomy air and musty smell, would be his last abode this side of the grave. A chill seized him at the thought, and he tottered like a drunken man. He glanced at the iron doors and massive locks. They were impregnable. Once behind them there was no escape.

He heard the muffled step of a man pacing up and down his narrow dungeon.

"That," said his guide, "is Frascatti, the murderer. He will be executed next week."

"Is there no hope for him?" whispered Isaac.

"None. He does not deserve any pity. He killed a fellow-countryman in cold blood for the sake of a few dollars. Hanging is too good for him."

Isaac's head swam, as the sergeant calmly spoke of the condemned man. Before long this same officer might be telling a casual visitor:

"There is the cell of Schwartz, the Jew, who killed his partner for a bag of gold."

Yes, he would add the word "Jew" in speaking of him. They always did that, and the whole family of Israel would be made to feel the disgrace.

Isaac tore himself from the frightful place, and turned his steps homeward. Never had the world appeared so sad and tearful. When he arrived home, a fever was raging within him. Lena would have sent for a physician, but he forbade it.

Next morning he felt better, but the recollection of that day of suspense remained with him for weeks.

Schwartz's visits to Father Kelly became frequent. There were numerous arrangements and specifications to be discussed, and as the conscientious priest refused to act entirely upon his own responsibility, the Jew and the Catholic were often thrown into each other's society. Schwartz retained few of the Jewish mannerisms which distinguished him when we first made his acquaintance. Contact with intelligent people, and the influence of his varied surroundings, had smoothed those little asperities of manner by which one invariably recognizes a foreigner, and Isaac had become thoroughly Americanized both in speech and manner.

The priest took delight in his visits, for he began to recognize in the philanthropist a keen intellect and a ready tongue. It is not surprising, therefore, that after their monetary discussions were at an end, they should drift into a discussion of business and politics, and finally of their respective religions; and to Isaac's agitated mind such conversations were welcome. They diverted his thoughts from their sombre channels.

The Catholic religion had hitherto been a sealed book



to Isaac. At his father's house it was never discussed, and he himself had neither the time nor inclination to investigate the mysteries of any religion but his own. Beyond the barest outlines, therefore, he knew nothing about the doctrines of the Church of Rome. He listened with interest bordering on amusement to the ideas which the priest unfolded, and mentally compared them with the theology to which he had so long been accustomed.

"I see you smile," said Father Kelly, one day after a somewhat lengthy elucidation. "May I ask why?"

"I beg your pardon for my seeming levity, but your doctrine is so strange that I scarcely know whether you are in earnest or not. We Jews expected a Redeemer, it is true, but he was to be a scion of the house of David, a valiant and warlike man, who would save Israel from persecution and re-establish a nation of Jews. You surely cannot blame us for denying your Saviour, for he does not possess one of these requirements."

"You forget," answered the priest, gently; "our Redeemer comes from the house of David."

"Not according to your statement, unless Joseph was his father, in which case his birth was natural. But apart from his pedigree, in what way can you demonstrate his genuineness as a saviour of the Jews? Has the persecution of the Jews ceased? Have peace and good will become general? Has the kingdom of Israel been re-established by his prowess or courage?"

"No," answered the priest, full of apostolic inspiration, and speaking as though he were in the pulpit.

"Christ came, not to restore an earthly kingdom, but to proclaim the kingdom of heaven. He has not redeemed us from the tyranny of conquering nations, but from the tyranny of sin. He has taken the sins of mankind upon his shoulders and opened the path to eternal life."

After a lengthy conversation on kindred topics, Isaac left the priest, in some mental perturbation.

"I scarcely know whether the Jews should feel honored or the reverse," he mused. "To think that one of our race, a meek preacher of whom thousands of Hebrews living at that time never heard, should be raised to the dignity of a God! Indeed, to my mind the story rivals in strangeness the most fanciful Kabbalism of our time-honored Rabbis. And yet this doctrine, strange as it appears to me, must have some great inherent merit, else it would not attract and hold such great numbers of adherents. How strange and incomprehensible it appears by the side of our beautiful and soul-inspiring belief in an only God!"

After Isaac had taken his departure, the priest walked slowly up and down his room, a smile of beatitude playing about his finely-chiseled lips. He had been inspired by an idea whose boldness startled him, while it filled his soul with delight.

"Who knows," he mused, "whether God, in his infinite wisdom, has not led this Jew to me, that I may point out to him the path of salvation? Our doctrines are new to him, but he did not disparage nor condemn them. He appeared to take a strange interest in all I said. Oh, if I could but say to him, 'Brother, believe in Christ! Abandon your ancient ceremonials and your

antiquated ideas, which lead but to perdition, and seek salvation in the crucified Saviour!’ Oh, that God would vouchsafe to me the triumph of having saved one perishing soul from the fires of hell! I shall sow the seed. God grant that it may fall on fertile ground!”

Several days elapsed before the Jew and the priest again met. Isaac called in reference to a donation to a Catholic seminary, and found a hearty welcome awaiting him. The priest was eager to resume the discussion, and Isaac, who had meditated long and earnestly, was not averse to taking up the conversation, with a view of adding to his knowledge of the subject. He had, in fact, come armed with a long list of questions concerning Catholicism, which the priest was but too happy to answer.

The good priest was in his element. He descanted long and earnestly upon his conception of God’s love for man. He related in his own eloquent manner the story of the birth, life and death of Jesus. He dwelt with loving fervor upon each incident, and when he told how the Son of God perished that mankind could enjoy eternal life, his face lit up with an expression of radiant joy.

Isaac listened attentively. His attitude was respectful and deferential, but he could not repress an occasional smile as the novelty of the doctrine was unfolded to him. While the priest discoursed, his mind reverted to Sweeny. He, too, had been a Catholic, in name, if not in fact. The spectre of the murdered man stood again at his side, darkening his soul with its persistent accusations. How he longed to exorcise the spirit

which tormented him! Suddenly he interrupted the priest, and asked, nervously :

“Suppose, your reverence, that a man had committed a crime. Let us take, for example, the worst in the catalogue of evil—murder. His conscience is bound down by the weight of grief and remorse. He is in constant danger of detection and punishment. He can find no peace, no rest—nothing but the ceaseless accusation of a guilty conscience. What comfort has your religion for such an unfortunate being?”

“We have nothing to do with punishment inflicted by law; but, oh, the blessed relief of knowing that your soul is saved—of knowing that your crime has been morally washed out—that God’s mercy and the kingdom of heaven are open to you without a doubt!”

“And how can a sinner obtain this salvation?”

“By faith in Him, the Son of God.”

“Let us suppose, for the sake of argument only, that I am such a remorseful sinner—I, a Jew. What would be the requisites of my salvation?”

“The first is baptism,” replied the priest, scarcely able to conceal his satisfaction at the turn the conversation had taken. “Baptism by itself will lift you into moral perfection; and faith in Christ will relieve your conscience of its weight of sorrow, and release your soul from its guilt.”

“Then the penitent thief, impostor, assassin need but faith to purify them?”

“Cast your sin upon the Son of God, and he will bear the burden; he will forgive.”

“Comfortable belief,” replied Isaac, after a pause.

"We poor Jews have been for centuries bearing our own guilt, believing that each man is held accountable to God for his own misdeeds, and never dreaming that by means of faith in one of our own race we might have lived lives of moral ease."

Father Kelly thought he detected a slight trace of sarcasm in Isaac's voice as he spoke. At length the Jew arose to take his leave.

"Ah, Mr. Schwartz," said the priest, shaking him by the hand, "this has been a delightful hour to me! To converse about my dear Saviour, to open the eyes of the erring to the beauties of my religion, is the greatest privilege I can conceive of."

"Christ has a noble champion in you, Father Kelly."

"I am but an humble toiler in the vineyard of the Lord. You will come again, Mr. Schwartz, will you not?"

"Certainly; our charity work is not yet at an end."

"I believe that he is half converted," said Father Kelly, when his guest had departed. "Oh, what a triumph it would be for our blessed church if we could rescue this soul from the kingdom of Satan!"

Had the priest been able to read Isaac's thoughts, as he wandered homeward, he would have been less sanguine as to the results of his ambitious plans.

Schwartz's donations to Catholic institutions attracted wide attention. His philanthropy was proclaimed in every church. Such bounty on the part of an Israelite towards other creeds was unheard of, and Father Kelly incorporated in his service a special prayer of grace for the benefactor, and an ardent request to the Son of God



to soften the heart of the unbelieving Jew, and lead him into the path of salvation.

For a time Isaac felt a contentment which had long been a stranger to him. He argued that the spirit of Sweeny might now rest in peace, as more good was being accomplished with his gold than if he had disposed of it himself. In the latter case it would probably have found its way into the rum shop. Now it was feeding the widow and the orphan. It might, after all, be a blessing to humanity to have Sweeny out of the way. He had been a worthless specimen of humanity. Who knows how soon he might have committed another murder and been hung for it? This manner of reasoning and this feeling of satisfaction were, however, of short duration. They were artificial and could not endure. During his moments of calm reflection Schwartz felt that, do what he would, his guilt was not thereby diminished. He had in no wise expiated his crime, and he realized more than ever that there could be no atonement until he had paid the penalty according to law.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE MIRACLE OF THE LAMP.

“ Oh, that a dream so sweet, so long enjoyed,  
Should be so sadly, cruelly destroyed !”—*Moore.*

MICHAEL LAZINSKY, the first Pole who settled in B——, was dead. The wintry blasts of America had proved fatal to his lungs, weakened by the miasma of his Polish Ghetto, and consumption had carried him off just as he was becoming accustomed to the peculiarities of American civilization. He had been a Talmud student in the old country ; a peddler and a schnorrer in the new ; but outside of his immediate family circle his death left no great gap, nor evoked any violent grief.

His widow, Simcha Lazinsky, sat “ shiva ” during the prescribed seven days, wailed against fate in her choicest jargon, and then set out with grim determination to earn a living for her four children. Such children ! Jankerle, her eldest, was nearly ten ; but already he had whipped a boy who lived in the same tenement, and who was two years older. He was a linguist, too, of no mean ability, speaking jargon and Billingsgate with equal facility, to say nothing of the passages of Torah which his father “ selig ” had taught him, and which he repeated, parrot-like, in pure Hebrew. Minka, Pesach and Beilche, though younger, were no less a

comfort to their mother in her affliction, and promised to be a great help to her after they had grown up. Michael Lazinsky had been sick and unable to earn anything for some time before his demise, and, in his helplessness, had relied entirely upon Isaac Schwartz's generosity for support. Three months' rent remained unpaid, and Simcha was politely but inexorably invited to move.

"Oh, woe is me!" she groaned, in jargon. "What will I and the 'kinder' do?"

The landlord understood neither Yiddish nor sympathy, and the widow's belongings were unceremoniously huddled into the street. Here sat Simcha, like a true daughter of Zion, surrounded by her children, weeping and refusing to be comforted.

The Hebrew Relief Association, being taxed to its utmost, refused to assist the widow, and again Isaac Schwartz, the patron and protector of all poor Jews, was appealed to. He paid for Michael's funeral and installed the widow and her brood in a four-roomed house in a court off of Oak Street, not far from where he had once faced poverty. She recovered her spirits when she was comfortably settled, and heaped plentiful blessings upon the head of her benefactor. It was a poor dwelling, amid poor surroundings, but had Michael only been alive to enjoy it, the place would have been metamorphosed into a palace.

Mrs. Mulcahey, who lived next door, paid Mrs. Lazinsky a social call during the first afternoon of her occupancy.

"Good day to yez," she said. "I do be hopin' we'll be good nayburs."

"Was sagt sie?" queried Simcha, in Yiddish, turning to Jankerle, the linguist.

"Sie, sagt, sie hofft as mihr werden sein gute fraind," interpreted the boy.

"Asoy! Sie soll haben a gut jahr!"

"What's that she do be after sayin'?" queried Mrs. Mulcahey.

Jankerle translated somewhat freely, and good will was at once established. Mrs. Mulcahey was loquacious.

"I hear yez be a widder. Och, shure an' its harrud to lose one's ould man in the middle of the winter! Me own husband, Tim, died this Christmas comin' three years ago, and divil a one have I found loike him since. Och, sorra the day!"

Here Mrs. Mulcahey furtively wiped away a tear.

"Was sagt sie?" asked Mrs. Lazinsky. "Warum thut sie 'bechiess' (why is she crying)?"

Jankerle explained in a few words, and soon the two widows were mingling tears and groaning in their respective idioms, after which the visitor left.

Next day Simcha started out with a large basket, filled with a generous stock of pins, soap, shoe-laces and kindred wares, all supplied by her friend and protector, Isaac Schwartz, and began to peddle her wares along Cedar Street.

In view of the fact that that night was the eve of "Hannukah," a few gross of wax candles were added to her stock. These were choice sellers. Not only did the people buy them for Hannukah lights, but for Christmas trees as well, a fact which did not worry the pious Simcha,

so long as she sold them. She religiously put a dozen in her pocket, for the gratification of her own little ones. That night she returned home in a gay and festive mood. She had cleared almost a dollar. Michael (peace to his soul !), after slaving all day, had rarely earned as much. Jankerle met her at the door, his Semitic face aglow with excitement.

"Memmeleben ! Gick amol her !" he shouted. "Come quick and look !"

He drew his mother to the wall back of the stairs. There was a wooden panel which had once been a door, but which had been nailed shut, for some inscrutable reason. On moving into the house the widow had tried to open it, but it had resisted her efforts. The boy, having nothing better to do, had spent an hour at the task and had succeeded in removing the nails. The panel stood open and revealed a lamp.

It was not a bronze lamp with onyx base ; not a lamp of Grecian design or Etruscan finish ; nothing but a cheap glass lamp, with brass cap and penny wick ; but its body was filled with clear, white kerosene, and it brought as much joy as though it had been the fabled lamp of Aladdin. Only those who have passed their evenings in darkness, relieved at the best by a tallow candle, can appreciate the joy of the Lazinskys at the prospect of light. The widow carefully examined the enclosure in which the lamp had been discovered. It was a kind of closet, about three feet high and nine inches deep. A shelf ran about six inches from the ground, and on this stood the luminary. Nothing else



could be found in the enclosure. The back was of wood, and unyielding.

Such an unexpected discovery, on the very eve of the Hannukah, was little short of miraculous. The lamp was lit and placed on the table, and a "mi-shab-erach" (blessing) said in its honor. Then Jankerle told his younger brother and sisters of the lighting of the lamp in the temple in the heroic days of the Maccabees, and the children appreciated the situation as never before. After the children had gone to bed Simcha sat up to read. The light was there, and she deemed it a good deed to utilize it. When it had burned out, the widow, with respect born of superstition, replaced it in the shrine, closed the panel and retired.

Next day the battle of life recommenced. The faithful mother trudged along with her basket, gratefully collecting the pence which were given her by the charitably inclined purchasers. She returned tired, but joyful.

When she entered her dark dwelling a pang of regret seized her. Why had she been so prodigal of the oil the day before? Now they would have to pass the evening in darkness. She went longingly to the panel, opened it and looked at the lamp.

Oh, miracle of miracles! The lamp was filled with oil, the wick trimmed, and a box of matches lay on the shelf, invitingly.

"Jankerle!" she called. "Did you fill the lamp?"

"No, mamma," answered the boy. "I didn't even look at it. Where would I get the money for oil?"

"God be blessed, forever and ever!" muttered the woman, piously. "It is miraculous."

What more natural than that the Lord should repeat one of his miracles? Did he not replenish the lamp in the days of Antiochus? Did he not fill the widow's cruse in the time of Elisha? Did he not send manna to the famished Hebrews? Why, it was as easy for the Lord to do these things as it was to send rain.

But why had he singled out her, the poor widow, for the honor of such a miracle? Possibly Michael Lazinsky (peace to his soul!) had a hand in it, and was using his influence with the Almighty.

After supper Simcha could no longer restrain herself. The secret was oppressing her. Some one had to share it. Near by lived Levi Rindskopf, the pious watchmaker, who, having delved deeply in holy lore all his life, would be apt to throw some light on the mystery.

She told Mr. and Mrs. Rindskopf of the miracle. They both went to the widow's house, looked at the lamp, blew it out, relit it and tested it in various ways, and came to the unanimous conclusion that it was a miracle indeed.

Mr. Rindskopf had read of similar wonders while studying the mysteries of Kabbalah.

"Do me the favor," said the widow, "and say nothing of this yet. Wait till to-morrow. If the lamp is again filled to-morrow night, we will notify Mr. Schwartz, and the miracle shall be proclaimed throughout the world. Oh, what will the Gentiles say? Where now are their miracles?"

Rindskopf promised. They remained until ten o'clock, and as the oil burned low they departed.

The widow replaced the lamp in its shrine. To pre-

vent any interference with divine work, and to minimize any cheating by profane hands, Simcha drove a nail into the panel before she went away next morning.

She could hardly await the coming of evening. It was the day before Christmas, and money fairly poured in on her. Surely the Lord had singled her out for great things.

At length she returned to the court. Before her door, and in her room, was a vast concourse of people. Rindskopf's wife had kept her secret as long as possible, and then, woman-like, told a few of her friends of the wonder. The news spread like fire. The crowd before the court was increasing. The whole congregation appeared eager to view the lamp. Simcha Lazinsky experienced the proudest moment of her life. Never before had so many people desired her presence.

She greeted her friends cordially, albeit with an air of superiority, as one befitting the special protégé of the Lord. Before opening the panel, she dutifully sent Jankerle to inform Mr. Schwartz, for he of all men ought to be cognizant of the strange facts. He had already heard rumors of the miracle, and was on his way to the court. On the road he met the Rabbi, bent on the same errand. Mrs. Lazinsky received them as a queen would her ministers. She was sitting on a broken wooden chair, surrounded by a vast and impatient multitude. Arising, she took the poker, and, going to the panel, wrenched it open.

"Shema Beni!" The exclamation burst from a dozen throats. There stood the lamp refilled, radiant in its beauty; but this was not all. On the shelf on

either side of it were dishes of fruit, nuts, raisins and cakes—a veritable feast of Lucullus!

In the presence of such a miracle, only one man preserved his presence of mind, and that was Rindskopf, a man, as we know, of great resources. He at once began to chant a blessing, and a holy awe took possession of the assembled people. Suddenly the back wall of the closet disappeared, disclosing the room in the adjoining house, and Mrs. Mulcahey's head appeared in the aperture.

“Och, yez thievin’ haythens! Yez contimptible Jews! To rob a poor widder like meself. Begorra, I imagined it was ye that was burnin’ me ile, an’ me away nursin’ a sick sister; and now yez do be afther stealin’ me Christmas dinner! Bad cess to yez! Oi’ll have the law on yez, that Oi will!”

“Was sagt sie?” groaned Mrs. Lazinsky, amazed at the apparition.

“Never mind what she said,” replied Mr. Schwartz, with a hearty laugh, in which all but Mrs. Lazinsky and Mrs. Mulcahey joined. “I’m afraid the days of miracles are past. Let us go home.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

"Affection is a coal that must be cooled,  
Else suffered, it will set the heart on fire."

—*Shakespeare.*

THAT Bertha Schwartz should have become a favorite in B—— is not surprising. A maiden of her intellect and powers of pleasing must quickly win her way into all hearts. Her Oriental beauty, quick wit and excellent conversational powers, opened to her the doors, not only of Jewish, but of good Christian society as well. She learned English with remarkable rapidity, and soon adapted herself to American ways and habits.

At Isaac's house her life ran on in an even tenor. She relieved Lena of many of her household cares, looked after the education of the children and helped materially to cheer her moody brother.

It was at the Harmony Club, however, that Bertha reigned in a truly regal manner. She was the life, as she had been the original inspiration, of the club. She was a graceful dancer, and was fond of worshipping at the shrine of Terpsichore.

Her singing was greatly appreciated by her not too critical audiences, and she had remarkable ability for arranging amateur theatricals, tableaux and like amusements for the edification of the club members.



With Bertha's advent in B——, therefore, a new social life began for the Jewish inhabitants. There was a continual round of gaiety, in which old and young participated, and in consequence old animosities were healed.

Bertha had, moreover, a talent for bringing together people mutually attractive, and at least three weddings owed their celebration to her deft manipulations. It may seem strange, therefore, to the reader, as it did to many a manœuvring parent in B——, that Bertha herself had not yet succumbed to the wiles of Cupid. It was not that Bertha lacked ardent admirers. Indeed, most of the men were her willing slaves, but she was slow in showing any preference. Perhaps the most energetic of her suitors was Mr. Jacoby, who, before he had known her a month, was so deeply in love with her that he could think of no future that was not bound up in some way with Bertha's. He meant to propose as soon as an opportunity offered, and could see no possible obstacle to his being accepted. That the young lady might have higher views, might aspire to a wealthier and more intellectual husband, did not occur to him, and she, without desiring it, had unconsciously led him on in his selfish belief. She sang to him, and accepted his company to club affairs, much as she did for Mr. Ehrlich and other friends, but showed him no special mark of sympathy. Bound up, however, in his passion, Mr. Jacoby accepted every sign of good will as an evidence of returned affection, and nerved himself to the ordeal of a proposal.

When the avowal came, Bertha was greatly pained.

Her open, sympathetic nature would not willingly have given offence, but she was forced to confess that she did not love him and could not risk unhappiness by linking her name with his. It was a severe shock to poor Jacoby, who had been so sure of his ground that he never contemplated the possibility of defeat. Life's joy seemed at an end for the despairing young man. To remain in the same town with his idol was impossible; and after lingering for a week or more, in hopes of a possible change in Bertha's decision, he disposed of his business and suddenly went South.

His precipitate departure, following so closely on the heels of his evident attachment to Miss Schwartz, set malicious tongues wagging, and though neither he nor Bertha vouchsafed any information, rumor was busy with their names.

"Vot do you t'ink about it, eh?" asked Mr. Rosenheim of Mr. Ehrlich one evening, as they walked leisurely homeward after a board meeting at the synagogue. "I ain't one of dem people vot gossip about t'ings dat don'd concern dem, but my vife and I vere avake for over an hour last night, speaking aboud it. Maybe dere ain'd nodding to it, but I tell you vot it is. It looks mighty funny for Jacoby, who just started a store und vos doing vell, to give up und go to a strange town, ain'd it?" And Rosenheim pursed up his lips sagely, and looked at Ehrlich, as though the latter might have some esoteric light to throw upon the mystery.

"Perhaps there is a reason which none of us suspects," replied Ehrlich. "One must not jump at conclusions. I have heard that Jacoby has a cousin living

in Richmond, and that he went into business with him."

"Ja, ja!" ejaculated Mr. Rosenheim, shaking his head vigorously. "It ain'd de cousin vich he has, but de vife he couldn't get, dat sent him to Richmond. You can't fool a man like me. Vot does de Talmud say? '*Hakkal Bernach.*' Vell, vot's de difference vot de Talmud says? It means dere ain'd anyt'ing sure about love except its uncertainty."

Rosenheim seemed pleased with his own powers of perception. Truly the Talmud stood him in good stead. Suddenly the old gentleman prodded his companion in the ribs, and asked, with a malicious wink:

"Vell, Mr. Ehrlich, dere is one rival less to fear. Vy don'd you try to vin der young lady yourself, eh? Vot does de Talmud say—"

"Oh, bother the Talmud!" cried Ehrlich, irritated at the president's loquaciousness; for it was beginning to touch a tender spot.

They walked on in silence for awhile, the president chuckling to himself, Ehrlich immersed in deep thought. Having reached Mr. Rosenheim's house, he hurriedly said good-night, and continued to stroll on alone.

Although he was averse to discussing the subject with another, least of all with a busybody like Rosenheim, he could not deny that he felt a secret satisfaction at Jacoby's departure, no matter what the cause may have been. He, too, loved Bertha devotedly. To him she was the most perfect creature earth had ever produced, and the one woman necessary to his happiness. He lacked the conceit, however, to believe that he might

be equally important to Bertha's happiness. In fact, often as he examined himself critically, he could find nothing which he imagined might appeal to so adorable a nature. Loving Bertha in silence contained as much bliss as he could aspire to for the present.

Once, indeed, he had been on the point of declaring himself, but had reflected in time that not in a single instance had Bertha evinced towards him more consideration than towards the other young men of her social set. In this respect his nature was the opposite of Jacoby's, who detected in every smile a mark of preference. Ehrlich was truly in love. With him it was a species of religious feeling, a fervent adoration of a woman whom he conceived to be better and nobler than himself. As he walked along silently under the starlit sky he felt a serene rapture in merely whispering her name. And the world seemed to him to be enveloped in an atmosphere of romance. The stars, the trees, the very people he passed, were to him but so many ripples on the vast ocean of limitless love.

The demon of doubt cut short his rhapsody and brought him back to realities. He had read somewhere that infatuation, like paralysis, frequently attacks but one side, leaving the other side untouched. Until Bertha herself gave him some indication of more than passing friendship, he would resolutely repress his flights of fancy.

Meanwhile he was not sorry that the number of eligible suitors had been reduced by the retirement of a formidable rival, and he consoled himself with the thought that "time brings roses."

The gossip concerning Bertha and Jacoby in due time

reached the ears of Isaac and his wife, and gave rise to a serious conversation regarding their sister's prospects.

We cannot blame Isaac for harboring hopes that Bertha would make a brilliant marriage. He was rational enough, in spite of his vagaries on other subjects, to realize that so exceptional a girl would not be long without an offer of marriage. He had given her every advantage that wealth could procure, and was anxious that she should distinguish herself as became her station.

"It is strange," he said to Lena one day, "that Bertha has not yet met her fate."

"I am glad of it," replied Lena, philosophically. "Bertha is invaluable to me. I should not know what to do without her. Don't be in a hurry to get her off of your hands."

"Oh, I'm not in a hurry! But she is getting on in years."

"Why, she is a mere child yet. Don't attempt to rush matters. Let her take her choice leisurely, and trust to her; she won't make a mistake."

"Yes, but Jacoby is gone. She might have had him. He was a clever fellow, and is destined to be rich some day."

"Perhaps she didn't want him," replied Lena, who alone knew Bertha's secret. "And I don't blame her. There are still a few eligible men in town."

"I'm afraid she's rather critical," insisted Isaac.

"So much the better. Bertha is too sensible to surrender to the first comer. Let her take her time, and when she does marry, may it be a good, pious Israelite who is worthy of her."



Bertha's wishes accorded perfectly with those of Lena. To her there was no thought of a brilliant match, for such things were not often realized in the narrow circle of Jewish society in B——; but she yearned for a happy marriage with a man after her own heart. Marriage was not to her a necessity or an ambition. She knew that she would never be the heroine of a romance, nor did she desire such a distinction. That marriage is the goal of a maiden's life, her proper sphere, and that a woman is happier in wedlock than in single isolation, was patent to her. But she would wait until love urged her to so serious a step. Until she could give her heart with her hand to a man possessing the moral and mental attributes necessary to insure her happiness, she would remain in the happy security of her brother's home. In the meantime, while she greatly admired Mr. Ehrlich, she did not as yet feel herself irresistibly drawn towards him. Why should she? He had never hazarded a display of his feelings towards her, and she knew nothing of the struggle going on within him. In her presence he was uniformly pleasant and deferential, brought her books, called to see her once a week, chatted with her about literature and music at the club reunions, but was not the gallant cavalier one expects to find in a lover. So Bertha wisely refused to let her mind dwell on his advantages.

Mr. Jacoby's sudden and unforeseen declaration had grieved her sincerely, and had the effect of making her more wary in her intercourse with other men.

About this time there came into her life a young man who unconsciously threatened to upset every plan, and

plunge the hapless Isaac still further into the gulf of despair. This man was August Kern, an intelligent and worthy person, and a Catholic. Kern was a designer by trade, and lived with his widowed mother in the house adjoining the one occupied by the Schwartz family. He was a son whose earnings were dutifully spent for the support and comfort of his gray-haired parent. With nothing but a brick wall between them, it did not take the neighbors long to become acquainted with each other. One warm summer evening Kern sat before his door, catching the stray breezes which were wafted from the river. Isaac and his family were similarly occupied before their own threshold. A conversation between the men was but natural. It began with the weather, and by a natural transition it drifted into a comparison of the climates of Germany and America, and thence in a comparative discussion of the institutions of these two countries. It was then that the important discovery was made that Kern had emigrated from a town in Bavaria, but ten miles from Schwartz's birthplace. Intimacy quickly sprang up between the expatriated countrymen. Kern was invited to bring his chair to Isaac's sidewalk, and before the evening had passed, friendship had been declared, and Joe and Rose were sitting contentedly upon Kern's knees, contributing their share toward the general sociability.

These open-air meetings became frequent, and when the cool weather made them impracticable, Kern was cordially invited to come into the house, and the conversation was continued in Isaac's cozy parlor. It usually fell to Bertha's lot to entertain the visitor, and, to judge

by the frequency of his visits, her endeavors in that direction were successful. They had both visited Nurnberg and Wurtzburg, had been to the mountains of southern Bavaria, and had seen many wonderful things in common. They would sit for hours discussing the old country, with its staid old ways, its quaint towns so different from those of America, its verdant hills, so much greener than those of the western hemisphere; and the hours passed in delightful conversation, and a sympathy was created which threatened to develop into something deeper than friendship.

Kern was a bright fellow of twenty-eight and somewhat of a student, having taken a course of study at a good German gymnasium, and being of an artistic temperament, he had adopted the profession of textile designing. He was a handsome youth, tall and well proportioned, with curly blonde hair and moustache and ideal blue eyes. A greater contrast in types of personal beauty than his and Bertha's could scarcely be imagined. His high forehead and straight, sensitive nose gave evidence of intellect which his speech did not belie. As Bertha was a girl who appreciated education, it is not strange that they found each other congenial and sought each other's society.

One morning Kern paid his neighbors an early visit and anxiously begged one of the ladies to come to his house, as his mother had suddenly become sick and was entirely alone and helpless.

Bertha at once obeyed the summons. She found the old lady in bed, with a high fever, and instinctively divined that the trouble was serious.

August watched her nervously as she arranged the bed and made his mother comfortable.

"Go for the doctor," she whispered, taking him aside; "it may not be serious, but it is best to take professional advice."

August's fear lent wings to his feet, and he soon returned with the doctor, who pronounced the sickness malarial fever. After giving Bertha instructions how to act, he left, promising to call again.

So Bertha was involuntarily installed as nurse. While August was at work, she and Lena took turns in waiting on the ailing woman, who quickly mended under their tender ministrations. August insisted on employing a nurse, but Bertha would not hear of such a thing.

"A pretty pass," she exclaimed, "if one should not be allowed to help a neighbor and a friend?"

She did more than nurse. She prepared the meals for Mr. Kern, and he was forced to confess that, whatever might be the relative value of its religion, the cooking of Israel far surpassed anything he had ever tasted.

If it be true that a man's heart is reached through his stomach, then it is not strange that August's peace of mind was sadly disturbed and his soul troubled. Bertha's patience, skill and amiability were powerful factors in setting his brain in a whirl and preventing sleep.

His mother's recovery a few weeks later almost caused him a pang of regret, for he felt it would mean a separation from Bertha, whom he now regarded in the light of a divinity. The old lady, thanks to good nursing, recovered with remarkable rapidity, and was soon

able to attend to her own household, and Bertha had no further pretext for visiting the house. August, after an enforced deprivation of her society for several days, could no longer resist the temptation to see her. He and his mother called on the Schwartzes to thank them for their kindly interest, and thenceforth August was more often at Isaac's house than at his own.

He was introduced to the young men who called, and soon found himself on terms of intimacy with Mr. Ehrlich and his friends, in whom he was quick to recognize ability and intellect above the ordinary.

There were few Germans in B—— except those of Jewish blood, and Kern found it but natural to drift into surroundings more congenial to him than those to which he had heretofore been accustomed. He forgot that these men were Jews, in the joy at finding them Germans, and they were no less pleased to welcome him to their social gatherings.

Had Isaac been less absorbed in his own sorrowful broodings, he would have observed and checked the intimacy which was springing up between this Gentile and Bertha; for to him, as to all Hebrews, there could be no prospect more terrible than a marriage outside of the Jewish faith. His mind was far from entertaining such an idea, however. He liked Kern for his cheerful, talkative disposition, and encouraged his visits. Occasionally he played chess with him, and, as Kern played poorly and Isaac well, his thoughts were for a time diverted from their gloomy channels.

Lena, too, shrewd as she was, suspected nothing. She liked August and found it pleasant to have him



call. He was a constant reminder of her old home. He would carve the most beautiful boats, with sail and rudder, for Joe, and tell Rose the most fascinating fairy tales. He would escort the ladies whenever Isaac was too tired or too preoccupied to accompany them.

The young man's religion, therefore, was not considered. With each succeeding visit Kern's admiration for his rosy-cheeked compatriot grew in intensity. It is but justice to Bertha to say that she did not suspect the feelings which were agitating August's breast. She had been reared in too orthodox a school to dream of matrimony with any but a Jew, and had any one suggested the possibility of Kern's falling in love with her, she would have laughed at the idea. The thought of such a denouement never entered her head. How could she imagine that Kern was burning with love for her? How could she surmise that this Christian, who could have his pick of so many girls of his own faith, would set his heart upon one of the despised race of Hebrews? She accepted his attentions as from a friend bound by ties of a common fatherland; but, as to being in love with him, the thought was preposterous and out of all reason.

Had she been aware of his feelings towards her, she would have promptly ended all communication with him; but she suspected nothing, from her lack of guile; Lena suspected nothing, from her lack of reflection on the subject, and Isaac suspected nothing, from his lack of interest in his surroundings. And so Kern's visits continued and increased in frequency.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE POLICE COURT.

“Avaunt! and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!  
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
Which thou dost glare with.”—*Shakespeare.*

THE year, with its joys and sorrows, passed quickly. The holidays were again approaching, and with them the anniversary of Sweeny's death. The harassed merchant became doubly morbid and despondent at the proximity of the Day of Atonement. He remembered, with increasing dread, the experiences of the year before, the terror which had seized him, the apparition he had seen; and he shuddered as he thought that his frightful ordeal might be repeated. Through force of brooding over the subject, he gradually worked himself up to a pitch of intense agitation as the Yom Kippur approached. The eight days between the New Year and the Day of Atonement were spent in vain grieving over the past, in vain imprecations over the present, in vain speculations concerning the future. He neglected his business and his charities, and appeared to lose interest in everything terrestrial. Lena tried to arouse him from his apparent lethargy, but to no purpose; and, having done her best, she left him, as usual, to his own devices.

Again the eve of the Holy Day was at hand. Isaac sadly went to his room to attire himself for the synagogue. It was still early and there was no need for haste. Dejected and despondent, he took a seat on the edge of the bed and stared dismally at the opposite wall. He became absorbed in a study of the wall-paper design.

His overwrought brain, prepared by brooding on the subject, was in a state to produce apparitions, if they came not of themselves. His imagination was freighted with fantasies, the horror of which grew as the fated hour approached. The ghost of his wrong-doing hovered over his every act and thought, and embittered his waking and his sleeping moments; and on this day, of all days, the torment redoubled.

It was just two years ago to-day since he had killed a human being. In spite of the rapid flight of time, what weary years they had been! How much anguish and misery had been crowded into them!

An inarticulate prayer, like a great sob, arose from his breast. It startled him, and he shivered at the sound of his own voice. In spite of every effort to the contrary, his mind reverted to the one idea.

Just two years ago, he mused, involuntarily, he had eaten his supper, and stood praying with his Tallith about his shoulders, when—horrid recollections! He would not indulge in them. He began to whistle, but after a few bars the sound died on his lips.

What a curious pattern that was on the wall—long scrolls of white winding about little figures of red! Those serpentine scrolls—what did they remind him of?

Ah, yes, he knew ! His torn praying scarf. Just so it was wound about Sweeny's head. Good God ! what a vivid resemblance ! No, he would not think of it. It was absurd to be constantly thinking of the past. He tried to laugh at an amusing story he had heard that morning, but the laugh turned to a groan.

The red figures on the paper, how like spots of blood they seemed ! How the blood had streamed from Sweeny's forehead, making a red pool upon the ground ! That stony glare upon the dead man's face ! He seemed to see it yet. It was too terrible ; he would drive it from his memory. He hummed an odd song in an effort to divert his thoughts into other channels.

Again he returned involuntarily to a study of the wall-paper. There were little dots of gold interspersed among the figures. They looked like nuggets. How they glittered ! Ah, that gold ! Would that he had never touched it ! He again saw himself digging for it behind the log cabin. How he scratched and burrowed, tugged and pulled, until he had torn the sack from its concealment ! How he crawled with it to the village, looking behind him at every step for fear of being followed by the murdered man ! It was horrible, horrible !

"Isaac !" cried his wife, from an adjoining room.  
"Are you ready ?"

The miserable man shrank in terror at the sound of her voice.

"Directly," he replied, hoarsely. "I will be ready in a moment."

He began to make preparations for his toilet, but

found himself so nervous that he could scarcely dress. It was a slow and tedious process. He caught sight of his face in the mirror. It was pale, like that of a corpse. He stared at his image for a long time, and then whispered, "Murderer!" And the reflection in the glass moved its ghastly lips, and sent back the accusation, "Murderer!"

"Good gracious, Isaac, why don't you hurry?" said Lena, irritably, coming into the room, and finding her husband still in a state of dishabille. "We will be late for the service."

"Go alone with Bertha. I will come later," said Isaac.

"No; you must come with us," replied his wife, anxious in spite of herself.

"It will take me a while to dress. I am somewhat nervous. Go in advance, and I will be there as soon as possible."

"If you are not feeling well, perhaps you had better stay at home, and let me remain with you."

"No; go with Bertha. We must go to the synagogue to-day. It is the holiest time of the year. Don't be uneasy about me."

Lena left the room reluctantly, and with her sister-in-law departed for the synagogue. The children had gone with their nurse to the park, and Isaac was left alone in the house with his sinister thoughts.

He felt instinctively that the dreaded ordeal was at hand—that he would again see the phantom of his victim, as he had seen it the year before. He tried to finish his toilet, but he trembled so violently that he



made but little progress. A dull, heavy weight lay upon his heart. He sat down again on the edge of the bed, and gazed into vacancy in the attitude of despairing attention, as if listening for some expected sound. The pallor of his countenance had reached a ghastly hue, an irrepressible terror pervaded his brain.

"Oh, that I might die!" The thought formed itself into words—into a prayer. "Would that God might take me to him on this day!"

Was this death? A mist seemed to obscure his vision, a languor seized upon him and his heart apparently ceased its throbbing. His head began to swim. There was no doubt about it, he was dying—dying with the hideous crime upon his soul, and no atonement, no mercy in heaven. No, he could not die thus. He cried aloud in his fear; but no one heard him, for he was alone.

He drew himself together with his little remaining strength, and began to walk up and down the room. He struggled to shake off the feeling which had dominion over him, and tried to believe that his fears were due to a foolish and useless agitation—the result of poignant remorse. It was of no avail. He was overpowered by a sense of guilt—by a fear that his crime would be speedily avenged. There was a species of wild hysteria in his manner as he measured the floor with his reeling steps.

Ha! the hideous delusion was coming back to him with startling vividness—the torn Tallith, the pick, the murder, the bleeding corpse. He shrank against the wall; his eyes were staring fixedly before him; there was a stony rigidity in his whole body.

What was that? A click at the front door, a creak upon the staircase. Was it the ghost of Sweeny coming for his victim? Isaac's veins stood out like whip-cords upon his forehead in the agony of suspense. The door opened hastily, and Lena entered. She had found no rest in the synagogue, and, troubled at her husband's absence, had hurried back to get him.

"Lena!" shrieked the terror-stricken man. "Lena, is it you? Oh, God, I thought it was he!" and he laughed hysterically.

"What is the matter, Isaac?" cried his wife, frightened at his strange agitation.

"Nothing!" he shouted, excitedly. "I was waiting for some one. Ha, ha, we have duped him! He will not dare to come if you are with me. I am safe—safe!"

"Dear Isaac, will you not confide in me?" she said, her eyes filling with tears.

"It is nothing at all, Lena. I was dreaming. It is all over now. Come, Lena, we will be merry; we will sing a song; we will dance."

The half-crazed man seized his wife around the waist, and pulled her about the room in a wild transport of hilarity. Around and around they went in a perfect devil's dance. Anything to forget, to drive away his maddening thoughts.

"Isaac, you are killing me," cried Lena, frightened beyond the power of words by this strange outburst. "Let me go. Do you hear? You are hurting me."

At length the frenzy came to an end through sheer exhaustion. Isaac released his wife, and, reeling to the

bed, he fell heavily upon it and swooned away. Lena was in despair. What could she do? Had her husband become insane? She had feared so on previous occasions; she was almost convinced of it now. Oh, if she could but fathom the terrible secret which was destroying his happiness and hers! The servant came in soon after with the children, and was immediately sent for a physician. By the time he arrived, Isaac had recovered from his swoon and lay peacefully and calmly in bed, with Lena tenderly ministering to his wants. The practitioner listened to a description of the symptoms, shook his head, prescribed a sleeping potion and went away, promising to call on the morrow.

"What do you think ails my husband, doctor?" asked Lena, as she accompanied him to the door.

"He is working too hard. By all means keep him away from the store, and from all excitement, such as speculation."

Lena promised; but she knew better than the doctor. It was several days before Isaac was entirely free from fever and could leave his room; but during those days of enforced idleness he had formed a desperate resolution. He would end his torture. He would go to the authorities, give himself up, and expiate his crime according to law. Then perhaps he would find relief from this terrible mental agony. This resolution once taken, it was astonishing how calm he became. He quietly went to a lawyer, made his will, and so arranged his effects that should an immediate imprisonment follow his confession, his wife would have no difficulty in continuing his business. He was prepared for the worst,

and ready for any ordeal. On Friday morning he would go to the police, and have done with this consuming suspense forever.

Friday morning came, and he who had been so steadfast began to waver. His old foe, indecision, was beginning to assert itself.

"My dear," said Lena, as they were sitting at the breakfast table, "you are eating nothing. Are you unwell?"

"No; I am not hungry."

"Try a piece of toast and an egg; they will do you good. Come, for my sake."

He tried to eat, but the experiment was a failure. He looked silently and piteously around the table at his patient, affectionate wife, at his smiling sister, his bright little son and prattling little daughter, and he wondered how they would take the news of his arrest. Lena would no doubt weep and curse the day she had married him. A sudden spasm contracted his features as he thought of it. Josie would live to hate the memory of a father who had heaped such disgrace upon his young life. Rose would grow to womanhood, despised and shunned because her father had been a murderer. Isaac tortured himself with these reflections. What could he do? Where should he turn for advice? The die was cast; he would give himself up. He would go at once, before fear and regret influenced his wavering will.

He arose hastily, and kissed them all good-by. Would he ever see them again? Yes, perhaps, from behind prison bars. Lena accompanied him to the door.

"I have something to say to you, Isaac," she whispered in the hall.

"What is it? I am in a hurry."

"It is important. Have you noticed how frequently August Kern calls on Bertha?"

"No, I did not observe it," replied Isaac, scarcely paying attention to the question. His mind was busy with a more important matter.

"This intimacy alarms me. August has been coming here nearly every evening for some weeks past, and I think it wrong to encourage his visits."

"August is a fine fellow, a perfect gentleman," answered Isaac, forcibly bringing his mind to the subject.

"Yes; but he is a Christian."

"Well, what of it?"

"I'm afraid he wants to marry Bertha."

"What an idea! He is friendly to all of us."

"Listen, Isaac! Last night he again called on Bertha. I had occasion to go into the room for my shawl, and came, I think, just in time to prevent a declaration. At least he seemed rather embarrassed at the sudden interruption. Would you permit Bertha to marry a Christian?"

"Heaven forbid! Bertha is too sensible to give him any encouragement."

"Bertha is an impressionable girl, like many others, and love laughs at religion, as well as at locksmiths."

Isaac's mind was again wandering from the subject. He was thinking of what he would tell the judge on the day of his trial.

"What had we better do, Isaac?" asked his wife.



"I don't know. I'll think it over. Don't worry. Something may occur between now and then."

"It is a serious matter."

"Yes, I know. We must do something, but I must go now. Good-by." He kissed her affectionately, twice, thrice, and held her in such tight embrace that she was surprised. Then he put on his hat and dashed down the stairs into the street.

On he rushed in mad haste to police headquarters, as though afraid that some one might stop him in his progress. He was anxious to unbosom himself, and dreaded a weakening of his determination.

The police van had just discharged its load of prisoners and was still standing before the station-house, with a motley group of curious idlers around it, staring in open-mouthed wonder at the dingy wagon with its little, railed windows. Isaac pushed his way through the crowd, and walked with slow, uncertain steps into the court-room. There was a sleepy magistrate, surrounded by a number of police officers, and several reporters who were taking down the proceedings for their respective papers.

There were half a dozen prisoners in the room—two arrested for intoxication, one for disorderly conduct, and several for petty theft. The accused were all persons of hardened character, and sat awaiting their trial, chatting as merrily as though they were occupying places of honor. A woman was being examined by the magistrate. Her crime was habitual drunkenness. She was a yellow, haggard, decrepit old female, in a tattered, faded shawl and a patched dress, with hair

disheveled and untidy, and eyes bleared with drink and exposure. It is hard to imagine a more repulsive and degraded object, a creature more debased by destitution and by misery, than this relict of what once was a woman. Hardened beyond redemption, she replied impudently to the magistrate's questions, and took her sentence of "Thirty days" with a smile of impertinent indifference. Isaac shuddered as he realized that he was brought to the level of this person, and going to an officer, he asked for the chief of police.

"He is not in yet," was the reply.

"I will wait for him."

Isaac sat down and stupidly watched the proceedings.

A boy was called up, accused of picking pockets. He faced the magistrate with an air of sullen bravado, while his mother, who was in the room, cried bitterly, and begged his Honor for mercy. The magistrate, stern and unrelenting, took no heed of the mother's prayers, but unhesitatingly pronounced the boy's sentence, "One year in the House of Correction."

Isaac's resolution to give himself up began to waver. It was terrible to be brought into the society of such malefactors. The air of the little room seemed reeking with corruption and vice. He could stand it no longer.

"I will be back again," he said to the officer, and rushed into the street.

He walked up and down before the police station for some time, confusedly trying to think out some plan of action. Should he go home and abandon his idea of surrender? No; his mind was made up; he must

go on to the bitter end. But he would gain time. He took a walk along the river and tried to think ; but his head was swimming and thoughts came sluggishly.

What if he committed suicide? It was the quickest way to end his agony. One plunge into the silently flowing water and all would be over. Not all! There was another world to come. Suicide would but double the sum of his iniquities. Did not the Law declare that suicide was as great a crime as murder? He continued his walk mechanically. Presently he heard a clock strike eleven. It was time to go back to the police station ; perhaps the chief would be in. He sought for the best words in which to tell his secret.

Yes, the chief had just come. Would the gentleman wait a moment?

Isaac sat down on the wooden bench reserved for criminals and waited. A thousand conflicting thoughts ran through his brain. The suspense was awful. Again the recollection of Lena and the children flashed through his mind. What would they say, what would they do, when they found him out? He pictured their surprise and grief, their tears and their disgrace. Dared he inflict this torture upon his beloved ones? And yet dared he go back home, where nothing but remorse and sorrow awaited him? He had come to confess, but he dreaded confessing. The effect it would have on his beloved family appealed to him through the exaggerated medium of fear. He saw the necessity for further concealment. He almost shrieked in his desperation, as the hopelessness of his case presented itself. He heard steps in the ante-room ; it was no doubt the chief of

police, who was coming to learn his errand. What was to be done? Isaac ran to the door. He wanted to temporize, to reason with himself. He reached the street and stood for a moment in indecision. Suddenly he heard a familiar little voice :

“ Papa, papa ! I’m so glad I have found you ! ”

It was Josie, who had been sent by his mother on an errand in the neighborhood. Isaac caught the little fellow in his arms and covered him with kisses.

“ Mamma has been awfully worried about you,” said Josie. “ Won’t you come home with me ? ”

Isaac hesitated. On the one hand was the forbidding police court ; on the other his loving family and comfortable home.

“ Yes, Josie, I will go home with you.” And taking his son by the hand, he turned his steps homeward.

Thus did Isaac’s brave resolution come to nought. Lena, who had been anxious over his long absence, received him with every demonstration of joy, and the family sat down to their midday meal. Isaac ate with appetite, and laughed heartily at the remarks of his children. It was like a happy reunion after a long and painful separation.

By evening, however, all his doubts and troubles returned to him, and he went to bed as thoroughly miserable as it was possible for mortal to be.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE HARMONY CLUB.

"Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,  
And all went merry as a marriage bell."—*Byron.*

THE Harmony Club rooms were ablaze with light and glory on the occasion of the second anniversary of the club's existence, and well might that institution be proud of its success, for it had accomplished wonders since an inspiration had given it birth. Twice it had been obliged to change its abode in order to accommodate its increasing membership. At least six weddings and several engagements were directly traceable to its benign influence, and the heavenly work was still going on. It now occupied the entire second floor of a hall recently built on New Street. There was a very large room used as an auditorium or ball-room. This was thrown open to the members on festive occasions only. There were besides half a dozen smaller rooms, ordinarily used for card-playing, and which rarely lacked occupants during the evenings, most members indulging in such innocent games as solo-whist, klobberyos and penochle. There was besides a library, containing a few books, magazines and a piano, which latter was in much demand on ladies' nights, but was otherwise tactfully silent.



On the great night of the club's anniversary the auditorium had been converted into a sylvan bower—that is to say, as well as long strings of evergreen and festoons of fir branches, dangling from the chandeliers, could carry out the illusion. Benches were placed in serried rows across the hall, and the platform had been converted into a stage by the aid of a number of heavy cretonne curtains stretched on wires behind the footlights.

A vast audience was present, and everybody, though comfortably seated, was still on the tiptoe of expectancy, for the programme presaged some wonderful numbers. A series of allegorical tableaux was to begin the evening's pleasure, after which a dance was to further divert the guests. Not one of the two hundred members was absent, and as each brought his family, or lacking that, his sweetheart, the hall was filled.

Bertha Schwartz had been breathlessly busy for the past two weeks rehearsing the tableaux, which were all of her own designing, and which promised to be artistically successful.

A good orchestra sat in front of the improvised stage and played a spirited overture, which was received with unstinted applause.

Mr. Bergthal, who, with his wife, sat in the front row, and whose daughter Emma had a leading part in the tableaux, remarked, rubbing his hands with evident satisfaction :

“Dot’s vot I call moosic. Id’s got some life about id, don’d id? Some of dem musicianers, ven dey get paid by de hour, play noddin bud shlow moosic, und

you don'd got your money's vorth. I like moosic fast, und lods of it."

His wife, as usual, agreed with him, and they concentrated their attention on the stage. The cretonne curtain was slowly drawn aside and revealed a plastic group, which, according to the programme, signified "The Sabbath."

Moses Blumen, a boy of seventeen, the son of the mantilla manufacturer, stood in pious attitude, completely covered by his father's "Tallith," and with an open prayer-book in his hand. At his right, and slightly raised, hovered Emma Bergthal, radiant in white. She represented the Genius of the Sabbath, and held her hand as if in blessing over the praying form. The orchestra softly played the sweet strains of the "Lecho Dodi."

A murmur of applause testified to the appreciation which the picture had awakened, and the curtain was twice withdrawn to gratify the pleased audience. Mr. Bergthal could scarcely contain his joy, and received the congratulations of the friends near him with loud and ungrammatical satisfaction.

The next tableau represented "The Sanctity of Law," and was equally felicitous in its realization. Izzy Rosenheim, in a long beard and flowing patriarchal robe, impersonated Moses, bearing in his hand the two stone tablets. On either side were two little girls in white, signifying "Civilization" and "Religion," pointing rapturously to the Ten Commandments. It was a very effective group, although the chubbiness of the Great Lawgiver, and his appearance of extreme

youth, notwithstanding his long beard and wig, were the subject of good-humored comment.

Mr. Roscnheim, however, found the presentation ideal.

"I tell you vot it is," he said, to the friends about him; "so long as dis is an ally-gorry, or votever you call him, und it represents de time vot vas young centuries ago, Moses ought to be a young man. Vot does de Talmud say—"

But the Talmud quotation was lost in the excitement caused by the drawing back of the curtain for the third tableau. This was striking, from the fact that Bertha Schwartz was its central figure. It typified "Liberty Extending Its Blessings to All Religions." Bertha, standing on a pedestal, classically arrayed in white, with a light blue liberty cap upon her head, her rosy cheeks beaming, her long, wavy black hair streaming down her back, was indeed a sight to bring pleasure, not only to Louis Ehrlich and Richard Kern, but to every man, woman and child in the audience. A more gracious embodiment of Liberty had never been seen in B——. At her feet, artistically grouped, stood the two Schneefelder boys and the two hopeful scions of the Basch family, each arrayed to represent a different creed, while Liberty extended both her hands to them in welcome and protection, the band meanwhile playing "My Country 'Tis of Thee."

It was a beautiful conception, beautifully carried out. Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Basch sat enraptured. The poor, down-trodden husband had the temerity to press his wife's hand in the ecstasy of his feelings, and she,

pausing in her knitting (which she always had with her), returned the pressure and smiled. Oh, the pride of having one's children appear so successfully before a discriminating public! Mrs. Schneefelder, too, sat beaming and blushing to the very edge of her brown "sheitel," and glanced on everybody in general, with a smile which plainly said, "Just see what my boys can do, if they put their minds to it!"

The curtain was being drawn aside for the second time on this pretty group, when an unforeseen accident happened. The hook holding the wire on which the proscenium screen was hung, pulled out of the post in which it had been negligently fastened, and the heavy curtain fell to the floor, revealing the hidden secrets of stage-craft, screens and costumes. But it revealed more. Sitting on the stage, in blissful ignorance of coming exposure, sat Emma Bergthal and Izzy Rosenheim. He had his arm lovingly about her waist and her hand in his, and was whispering something very delightful into her ear.

It was the prettiest, most successful tableau of the evening, and a shout of laughter greeted the unexpected picture. Izzy sprang up, red with mortification, and Emma hung her head with shame.

And Mr. Bergthal! He rose from his seat, furious with anger, and rushed up the aisle and bounded upon the platform.

"You young vagabond!" he shouted, seizing Izzy by the arm with one hand and administering a box on the ear with the other. "Didn'd I told you twice alretty I don'd vant you to have noddin mit my daughter to do?"

Got out of here so fast you can, und if I caught you again mit mine Emma making love, I vill lick you dill you couldn't shtood up alretty!"

"Hush, papa, you're making a scene," said Emma, pacifically, while the whole audience was in an uproar at the unexpected denouement.

Rosenheim, seeing his flesh and blood assaulted, was on the point of joining the actors on the stage, but was wisely restrained by his sagacious wife, and Bergthal was quietly and firmly led to his seat by Mr. Ehrlich, who, as master of ceremonies, could not look with indifference upon so flagrant a violation of the programme.

Further tableaux being out of the question, the hall was cleared for dancing.

Mr. Rosenheim immediately sought out Mr. Bergthal, whom he found guarding his daughter in the dressing-room, and cried, with suppressed anger, but with an assumed dignity befitting his position as president of the congregation :

"I tell you vot it is, Mr. Bergthal ; if you ever lay hands on my boy again, I'll have de law on you."

"Und I told you vot it is," said Bergthal, in growing excitement, his face red with indignation ; "if I ketch your son mit my daughter again alretty, I'll have der law on him."

"Ha ! Maybe you don't t'ink my son good enough for your daughter ? Eh ?" cried Rosenheim, in momentary forgetfulness of his dignity.

"No, sir-ee ! He ain'd goot enough her shoe-strings to tie !" retorted Bergthal, in a passion.

What more might have been said is a matter of con-



jecture, but Bertha had providentially come into the room. She was still clad in her garb of Liberty and looked like a veritable angel of peace.

"Come, my dear friends," she said, taking a hand of each, "you must not quarrel here. Don't you know that everybody is talking about you?"

They became calm as she spoke, in her sweet, musical voice.

"Now let me ask you a question. Mr. Rosenheim, have you any deep-seated animosity against Mr. Bergthal?"

"I? None in de least. I have noddin' against him. I tell you vot it is. He's jealous of my business, dot's all."

"And you, Mr. Bergthal, what cause have you to hate Mr. Rosenheim?"

Bergthal hung his head sheepishly.

"I don'd got noddin' against him personally. He vos a goot enough man."

"Then it's simply a question of business jealousy? You both esteem each other personally. Are you going to let this matter of competition poison your own lives and that of your children? Izzy loves Emma. I've known it for some time. They won't be happy without each other. Now, Mr. Bergthal, answer me. Are you going to sacrifice Emma because Mr. Rosenheim has the bigger clothing store?"

"Dot ain'd so. Der Mammoth Cloding Emporium does der biggest bissness on der street, und I can prove it."

Rosenheim laughed a sarcastic laugh, but said nothing.

"Well, granted that you are the bigger of the two," continued Bertha, "can't you be magnanimous to your competitor and be friendly with him? Come, shake hands and be friends."

Rosenheim readily held out his hand, his stout, good-natured face beaming with benevolence. Bergthal was reluctant.

"I vill on one condition make up," he said. "I don'd vant him any more to advertise dot he does der biggest bissness, begause it don'd is true."

"I sold twenty t'ousand dollars last year," said Rosenheim, emphatically, "and dot's more dan you sold."

"Dere he is gommencing again!" cried Bergthal, in growing excitement.

"Come, gentlemen," interposed Bertha; "this is not the way to be friends. Mr. Rosenheim, for the sake of your son, do you promise me not to push your claim as being greater than Mr. Bergthal?"

"I promise," replied Rosenheim, gravely.

"Now, Mr. Bergthal, what do you say for Emma's sake?"

"Dere is my hand. Shake!" said Bergthal.

Friendship was at once restored, and, while the erstwhile foes stood chatting, Bertha diplomatically went out to seek Emma and her lover. She found them in the wardrobe, cooing as though no irate fathers existed, and, with a hurried word of explanation, brought them into the presence of their reconciled parents.

"Now, my friends," said Bertha, "crown your reconciliation with a paternal blessing on these two turtle doves."

"You love dot young scoundrel, don'd it?" said Bergthal, affably, to his daughter.

"Yes, papa."

"Und he loves you?"

"Yes, sir," answered Izzy, timidly.

"Vell, Rosenheim, I'm satisfied to der match if you are. Vot do you say?"

"I gif dem my blessing," said Mr. Rosenheim. "I've known it vas in de vind for some time. I tell you vot it is. Love may be blind, but odder people usually have dere eyes open and know vot's going on. I tell you, love vill find a vay, if it has to go around behind de stage. Vot does de Talmud say? Vell, never mind vot it says; it means, voman vas made after man, and she's been after him efer since. And now, my children, I vish you 'Massael tof,' and hope dot de only competition between you vill be to see vich can make de odder de happier."

Here Rosenheim and Bergthal both shed tears of joy, and went out arm in arm to find their wives and tell them the good tidings.

The news spread rapidly, and the happy couple and their radiant parents were soon surrounded by enthusiastic throngs, all eager to wish them joy. Bergthal assured his friends that he always had in secret the kindest feelings toward his competitor, and that nothing could afford him greater pleasure than this alliance between the two clothing stores which were henceforth to lead the world. Rosenheim, with much shaking of his round head and of his plump hands, declared

this to be the happiest day of his life, for "Vot does de Talmud say—"

Before the proud father could deliver himself of his Talmud quotation, Mr. Solomon Basch took Izzy, the future groom, aside, and gave him some excellent advice in German on the proper attitude towards one's wife.

"Most men," he said, confidentially, "expect to have their own way after marriage, but their wives relieve their minds quickly of any such false impression. Give in gracefully to your wife from the start. You will have to do it in the long run, anyhow. I would like to persuade you, my young friend, to stay single, but I suppose it's too late."

"Is matrimony so terrible?" asked Izzy, with a twinkle, for he knew of poor Basch's woes.

"Terrible!" repeated Solomon. "I read the other day that seventy-five per cent. of the criminals of this country are bachelors. Don't that prove that they'd rather go to the penitentiary than get married? You have my sympathy. Any time you want advice, I'll be happy to give it."

And Solomon Basch went meekly back to his wife, who berated him soundly for having left her alone with her knitting.

The dancing began, and Bertha led the waltz with Mr. Ehrlich. Dressed in her light apparel, she looked like a wood nymph as she glided among the festoons of evergreen, and Ehrlich, tall, handsome and happy, made a very acceptable Daphnis at her side. The success of the wooing of Izzy and Emma made him long for an equally fortunate realization of his own hopes. Her

pliant form, close against his own, his arm about her graceful waist, her breath upon his cheek, they moved in the dreamy mazes of the waltz, and he realized as never before how dear she had grown to him—how his whole existence was bound up in hers. The music, plaintive as the cooing of a dove, answered to the yearnings of his heart. He would have given a year of his life to have had her soul answer his own—to have known the measure of her love for him. Her beauty moved him as did sweet and luscious music, searching the subtlest emotions of his soul with exquisite harmonies. He seemed to be in perfect accord with her, as though the vibrations of their very heart-beats were in unison.

Surely the moment was a propitious one for declaring his love and winning her promise, and yet he hesitated and delayed. Fatal delay! He thought Bertha too lively, too animated, too filled with the sense of her triumphs on this evening to be approached on a subject of such vital importance. He would wait for a more favorable opportunity—for an unmistakable sign from her that she wanted him to speak. A dozen names were on her programme; she was courted, made much of. It was an inopportune time to advance his claims. What was he that he should aspire to so much grace, beauty and loveliness? And so, while he conversed brilliantly with Bertha on interesting topics, and she laughingly replied, his brain was in a tumult and his heart beat with a violent passion, but no word of love escaped him.

Mr. Kern was Bertha's next partner, and he, too, was



consuming his heart with love for her. He spoke little, but his every glance was the expression of adoration. It is strange, but nevertheless true, that Bertha had as yet no just conception of the strength of Kern's affection for her. She liked the quiet, reserved, unexceptional young man, with his blonde hair and honest blue eyes. She appreciated his attentions, but she never realized the agitating hopes that her slightest smile called into life. The love-sick young man could see no obstacles to his union with Bertha. His own love promised a guarantee for hers, and he, like his unconscious rival, Ehrlich, only awaited a fitting opportunity to throw himself at her feet. But although Bertha had no objections to being adored, the thought that a Gentile was making himself miserable for her sake, a Jewess, would have caused her to break off an attachment which could only end in disappointment, if nothing worse.

Bertha was supremely happy, and as dance followed dance she floated in a heaven of delight. Surrounded by her smiling young friends, set off by radiant light and color, and moving rhythmically to exquisite music, she resembled, indeed, a Calypso among her nymphs. The dance ended, alas! too soon. The old folks had long since disappeared in couples, leaving the floor to the younger generation, and at length these, too, turned homewards.

Before leaving, Emma Bergthal kissed Bertha gratefully.

"Thanks to you, my dear," she said. "I am very, very happy."



They walked home together.



"And I congratulate you with all my heart," said Bertha.

"When may I congratulate you upon a similar happiness?" asked Emma, archly.

Both Ehrlich and Kern would have gladly answered "Now" but for the restraining presence of the other.

Bertha laughed lightly.

"Oh, I'm in no hurry," she said.

"But you must marry some time," insisted Emma.

"I suppose so. It is unfortunate that we girls must either marry or remain old maids. What a terrible alternative!" said Bertha, gaily.

"Is the thought of matrimony so awful to you?" asked Ehrlich, with a ray of hope.

"Horrible!" replied Bertha, tragically. "It is a thing to be fostered in others. But as to myself—brr! If matrimony is not always a failure, it is frequently but a source of compromise, and therefore but a poor exchange for single blessedness."

Bertha laughed merrily as she uttered these sage remarks, which might have come more appropriately from Solomon Basch; but to Ehrlich they sounded like the knell of his fondest hopes; and Kern, too, felt his spirits sink and his chances for happiness diminish.

They walked home together, Ehrlich on one side and Kern on the other of their divinity, the young men taciturn, the girl overflowing with animation and spirits. It was the final tableau of the evening, and might have been entitled "Love, the Connecting Link between Differing Creeds."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE THRESHOLD.

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in all the creeds."—*Tennyson*.

FATHER KELLY sat in his cheerful library, writing a sermon. It was a forceful text, taken from the third chapter of St. John: "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already." It was divided into two parts, "The Blessed" and "The Accursed." The glories of heaven, the eternal hallelujahs of the angel choir, the dazzling splendence of God's throne, were set off in striking contrast to the anguish which awaited the rejected. It was a sermon calculated to stir the latent enthusiasm of his flock and set them squarely upon the path of salvation. Woe to the infidel! God, in his mercy, which passeth human understanding, had an unlimited supply of wrath for the obdurate wretch who denied his only begotten Son. A hardened skeptic might not have found much logic in its arguments; but as the priest read it, with appropriate gestures, he imbued it with the magnetism of absolute conviction, with the positive assurance of the reality of the contrasted pictures.

While Father Kelly was thus occupied the bell rang, and Mr. Isaac Schwartz was announced.



"If there is one man who deserves to escape the eternal torments," said the priest to himself, "it is this Jew. He is undeniably a noble man. Alas! even he will suffer with the guilty, unless he repents in time and accepts the Redeemer."

"How are you, my dear Mr. Schwartz?" was his cordial greeting.

"Nothing to boast of, your reverence. I have been quite ill."

Indeed, Isaac's face was bloodless, and the deep wrinkles on his forehead denoted great mental suffering.

The priest expressed his solicitude, after which a pause ensued, each being too much occupied with his own thoughts to break in upon the other's silence.

"Father Kelly," at length began Isaac, in a voice trembling with suppressed emotion, "I have come to hear more about your religion."

The priest's face became radiant with pious satisfaction.

"Not to become a convert," added the other, hastily, watching the priest's countenance. "Merely to draw comparisons between your faith and my own. I confess that while your doctrine appears absurd, it interests me, nevertheless."

"You will find it truth incarnate, a crystallization of God's wisdom, consoling and comforting to the suffering soul."

"Can your creed secure peace of conscience to the guilty?"

"That it can, and absolution from his sins."

"Convince me of what you say, and perhaps—"

He did not finish, for the words stuck in his throat ; but the priest understood him.

Here was the long waited-for opportunity of saving a soul, of rescuing a victim from Satan's clutches, of leading a sheep to Christ's fold. The priest cast his eyes towards heaven, as if in gratitude for the opportunity, and in supplication for strength to fulfill his important mission. Then he considered how best to initiate this unbelieving soul into the mysteries of the church. It was a delicate task, and Father Kelly felt his unworthiness ; but he was imbued with the enthusiasm of faith, without which no work, secular or holy, can thrive. Having finally determined upon a course of action, he set out upon his task without delay, and taking his Testament in hand, read through portions of the Gospels, explaining and amplifying the text in his own words. Strange and incredible it all seemed to Isaac. A Jew's mind, trained for centuries to delve through musty parchments, through hair-splitting arguments and knotty points of law, finds analysis its legitimate field, and takes nothing for granted that is not susceptible of being weighed in the scales of reason. Schwartz's analytical brain could not absorb this new doctrine without expressing doubts and displaying a natural incredulity. The priest, seeing this, requested him to ask any questions that might arise in his mind. Isaac checked the queries which suggested themselves. Time enough for questions later on, he thought. For the present he wanted to grasp the general outlines of this strange religion, which to him meant agony and despair, or peace of conscience and

repose of soul. He drank in every word the priest uttered, and fixed it indelibly upon his mind. When Father Kelly had finished his lesson it was quite late, and Isaac arose to go.

"May I ask your opinion on what you have heard to-day?" said the priest. "Have my humble efforts met with some measure of success?"

Isaac shook his head in doubt.

"In all you have told me," he said, "I see but a touching story of a Jew who rose above his profane surroundings, and by teaching gentleness and humanity, the true doctrine of Moses, collected a number of interested disciples about him. He gave up his life upon the cross, as many a political offender did in his day, when crucifixion was in vogue, instead of hanging or guillotining. There is nothing in all that you have told me so far that carries with it proof that Christ was the true Messiah."

"But consider His divine conception and birth, His divine mission," cried the priest.

"Is that susceptible of proof? If so, convince me of it. As a Jew, I have been taught a certain religion, in which I placed implicit belief. There came a time when I examined the details of my creed with a critical eye, and found that many of its doctrines were absurd, irrational—foreign ideas, which were in the course of time engrafted upon the primitive faith. I have rejected such ideas as incompatible with rational Judaism. I find that I am still a Jew. My belief in one God, and my observance of the humane and wise laws of Moses, make me a Jew,

even though I refuse to observe many of the ceremonies of my fathers."

"To be a good Jew," interposed the priest, "is the first step towards being a good Catholic."

"I agree with you. To be a good man is the foundation of any religion; but to be a good Catholic, I must believe in the divinity of Christ. Prove to me beyond a doubt that Jesus was more than human, that He was, in truth, the Son of God, with power to absolve from sin and to insure happiness hereafter, and I will devote myself, heart and soul, to your church."

"I will prove it," said the priest, with joyful conviction.

"How?"

"By the Scriptures themselves, by the words of the prophets in whom you believe, and by the testimony of the thousands who have found redemption in Christ."

"So be it. I will come again to-morrow; but I warn you, you will have to combat the prejudices, the convictions, the beliefs of years. You will have to undo the results of a thorough training in certain religious grooves and teach my heart to reverence what it has heretofore doubted. It is a difficult task, Father Kelly."

"God will inspire me," was the answer. "Christ will help me to glorify His name. I accept the mission, and will carry it to a successful issue."

Isaac's mind was in a turmoil when he left the priest. His enthusiasm for the new creed seemed to wane before it was well developed. All that he had heard appeared to him but the invention of finite man, a grafting of

heathen myth on Hebrew lore. He failed to discover an atom of comfort in the incomprehensible doctrine. It was too ideal, and held no solace for the actual which was gnawing at his heart. Through this mystic tale of a Saviour of souls and a Redeemer from sin, he seemed to hear the "Hep! hep!" of the Middle Ages, and see the yellow badge of persecution. The martyrdom of the Jews, at the instigation of missionaries and in the name of this creed, arose before him and drove the blood surging through his brain.

The thought occurred to him that he might learn from books, find consolation in the writings of theologians; for he feared to trust his own confused powers of reasoning.

On his way home, therefore, he stopped at a book store and bought a promiscuous collection of volumes. There was, first of all, a Bible, containing both Testaments—an English edition—with an allusion to the Messiah at the head of every column to which it could possibly be applied; there were several Commentaries on the Bible, in which the Scriptures were considerably improved and amplified; there was an illustrated folio on the life of the Blessed Virgin, by the Abbe Orsini; there were also a number of tomes by ancient ecclesiastical writers; a translation of Bulanger's "Life of St. Paul;" a "Life of Jesus," by a German free-thinker, and, finally, several volumes of sermons by Protestant ministers, in which, as he found later, the Catholic Church was unmercifully condemned as anti-Christian. This diversified collection of books was sent by wagon to Isaac's house, and the harassed Israelite drove away remorse for one night, at least, by locking himself in his



room, perusing his new library, and increasing his doubt and uncertainty, until he fell asleep from sheer mental exhaustion.

While he was thus profitably employed, August Kern had put on his best raiment and had called at the Schwartz mansion to see Bertha. This young lady received him with her customary affability. Lena, too, was particularly attentive on this occasion. Contrary to her custom, she remained obstinately in the parlor and took a more than usual interest in the conversation. Her repeated attempts to open her husband's eyes to the intimacy between his sister and their neighbor had remained futile. He was too deeply engrossed in his own psychological and religious problems to pay the least attention to her seemingly absurd ideas, and Lena, apprehensive of the result of this ill-assorted friendship, determined to keep the two apart as much as possible.

She hesitated about speaking to Bertha on the subject, knowing from experience in her own love affair with Isaac that opposition often served to strengthen the inclination where it had taken root, and to create it where it did not already exist. She made up her mind, therefore, that no blame should attach to her, and henceforth considered it her duty to throw every obstacle in the way of further companionship between them. She could not well forbid Mr. Kern the house, but she would see to it that this friendship did not ripen into matrimony.

Lena therefore sacrificed her evening on the altar of duty, and August sat on pins and needles (metaphorically speaking) during three long hours.

"Perhaps she will soon retire," he thought; but she remained steadfastly at her post. The conversation ran through the entire gamut of topics, from the weather to the latest political news. At first it was animated, then it dragged, and finally it languished altogether. The success of the Harmony entertainment furnished a subject for pleasant discussion, lasting almost an hour; but even that grew monotonous at last.

Lena yawned, but did not betray her trust. Bertha thought she had never spent so long and dreary an evening. August, having sought in vain for a pretext to remain longer, arose to leave, and Lena, with consummate ability, related, *en passant*, that Bertha would be occupied during every evening of the week. Tomorrow they would be at Franzman's, the next day they were invited to Kauffman's, and so on. It was a polite but unmistakable way of informing the young man that, for a week at least, his company might be dispensed with.

In the morning Lena again imparted her fears to her husband. A man who has been all night in the company of ecclesiasts, who has endeavored to digest the miracles and parables of the New Testament, is not the proper person to approach on so trivial a subject as matrimony. He was in a state of irritation, bordering on hysteria.

"You probably exaggerate," he said, impatiently. "You mistake Kern's friendship for something more serious."

"Well, you will see when it is too late. You will have yourself to thank for it, if Bertha marries a Catholic."

"Marries a Catholic!" cried Isaac, in a passion, but he suddenly checked his anger. "Well, why not?" he reflected.

Was he not himself considering the advisability of becoming a convert to Christianity, and with him his family would have to embrace the new faith? His head swam at the strange idea, and he staggered for a moment like a drunkard. He had not yet considered Lena and the children in this connection.

"Don't worry, Lena," he said, after a pause, during which he had time to master his riotous thoughts. "If Kern persists in his attentions, we must give him a hint to remain away."

"You would not consent to your sister marrying a Gentile?"

"What are you thinking of? Never!" he cried, passionately; then, recollecting himself, he added: "There, we will talk no more about it. Bertha will know how to act. I am going out, dear, on a matter of importance, and may not be home until dinner."

Isaac's matter of importance led him to Father Kelly's. Vague recollections of Israel's pathetic history and unmerited sorrows arose within him as he walked along. He thought of a paragraph he had but recently read which had awakened such a sympathetic chord that he had memorized it. "If there are ranks in suffering, Israel takes precedence of all nations; if the duration of sorrows ennobles, the Jews are among the aristocracy of every land." And he contemplated throwing off his rank and glory—for what?

Once he was on the point of turning back, but his

cowardice of conscience drove him on. He was like a man under hypnotic influence, drawn on by the suggestion of his own accusing soul.

The priest received him with open arms, and introduced him to Bishop Keane, who had apparently dropped in casually to see his friend. The presence of the bishop, however, was by no means an accident. He had been apprised of the Jew's researches after higher knowledge, and was present to help land this valuable fish which swam voluntarily into the net of the holy church.

A wonderful man was Bishop Keane. During his thirty years' service in the diocese of B—— he had gained the sincere love of every member of his flock. His open, benevolent face, crowned by a high intellectual forehead and closely-cropped gray hair, seemed perpetually beaming with benevolence, spiritual joy and good will to all mankind. He was a man of thorough education and of liberal ideas, and while he was heart and soul in unison with the doctrines of his church, still there lurked in the depths of his soul a well-defined hope that God might have happiness in store even for adherents of other faiths. In his devotions he was zealous and sincere, but by no means fanatic. His love for the human family, and compassion for their weaknesses, made him tolerant toward those who had not yet discovered divine truth.

Isaac Schwartz hardly found himself in the society of this worthy prelate before he felt something akin to love for him. Father Kelly rehearsed in a few words the progress made, and Bishop Keane took up the

thread of religious instruction from the point where it had been broken off.

What an eloquent man the bishop was ! How ably he handled the subject ! What a diviner of human motives and passions ! Before they had been together half an hour, he discovered, firstly, that Isaac sought out the church for her ability to absolve from sin ; secondly, that there was a particular sin to be atoned for ; thirdly, that Isaac had committed that sin, and, fourthly, that it must be a serious crime that could drive a Jew from the faith of Abraham. All this he had learned, not by questioning the neophyte, but by the questions Isaac put to him.

With consummate ability, the bishop spoke of the doctrine of vicarious atonement, of the love of God, who had sent his only begotten Son upon earth to wash away man's guilt. There was no power inherent, he said, in man to atone for his own evil deeds. The Son of God had suffered and was crucified ; the Father's wrath was thereby appeased, and henceforth all those who believed in the Saviour would be absolved from the terrors of purgatory and find peace eternal.

This was the substance of the bishop's arguments. It was so earnestly, so enthusiastically, presented, that Isaac felt ashamed to ask the questions which hovered on the tip of his tongue. He would have liked to ask why God could not revoke his damnation edict as easily as he had decreed it ; why, having created original sin, he did not simply drive it out again ; why he had not made man as prone to do good as he is to do evil ; why, if Jesus was the Son of God, he had not



announced the fact in such unmistakable terms that the whole world would know it beyond peradventure. He felt it would be sacrilege to ask all this in the face of the bishop's eloquence, especially as the prelate began to apply the doctrine of vicarious atonement to Isaac's individual case.

"We will take it for granted that you have committed a wrong, as which human being has not? Men may persecute you and punish you, but is there no satisfaction in knowing that God has forgiven—that the Lord is more merciful than man? He can read your heart, and knows what a sway original sin has there. And Christ is ever at God's side, whispering, 'Forgive him, Father; for such have I suffered and died.'"

Isaac, in spite of his doubts and prejudices, felt his heart swell at the thought of such a pardon. Oh, that he could feel that it was really true!

"But," he asked, suddenly struck by an idea, "if God has forgiven the repentant sinner, what right has the State to punish him?"

"Punishment," replied the priest, "is necessary to prevent the growth of crime. Our faith concerns itself only with the salvation of the soul and happiness after death."

Then the bishop skillfully drew a contrast between the terrors of hell and the glories of heaven; a mild contrast, because he did not want to frighten Isaac at the outset.

"Can you hesitate in choosing between the two?" he asked.

"But how can I find such happiness?"

“By belief in Him, the Crucified.”

“Still that word ‘belief.’ I can only believe what I know for a certainty to be true. Your proofs!” he cried, passionately. “You must prove to me the divine origin and mission of your Saviour. Remember that a wide, almost impassable, gulf separates your mode of thinking from mine. You have been educated to your belief, and it would be difficult for you to throw it aside. I, on the contrary, have been brought up to a belief diametrically opposed to yours. The Jew has been taught to loathe the Christian religion. Eighteen centuries of persecution have led him to see but the worst, the most hideously cruel and inconsistent features of your creed. We have been branded slayers of God, as though it were possible for a man to slay his Creator. And now you say, ‘Believe in one you have been so long taught to deny.’ You surely possess proof of His divinity. Give me this proof and I will believe.”

With a zeal born of love for their undertaking, the priests began their difficult task. The conversation occupied the greater part of the morning, and Isaac, who was reminded of other duties, left Father Kelly’s house, with a promise to renew his visit next day.

He was in a profound reverie as he walked homeward. Once out of the presence of these priests, the beautiful structure they had so laboriously reared seemed to fall together about his ears. Doubts, doubts, doubts! They assailed him from every quarter. After all they had told him, they had given him no proof of its truth. They had interpreted various portions of the

Scriptures to suit their own ends. Rabbi Kauffman had in his sermons interpreted many of these passages to mean something entirely different—something strictly Jewish.

Isaac's mind was a prey to conflicting ideas. He must have positive assurance—perhaps he could find it in his books. Forgotten were his business, his speculations, his charities. He locked himself up in his room, and devoted his afternoon to study. Lena, seeing in this strange seclusion but another symptom of his dreaded disease, refrained from disturbing him, but attended to her household duties with a heavy heart.

The bishop and Father Kelly continued their instructions next morning. A serious question had arisen in Isaac's mind during the night. Why should a repentant sinner who believed be so sure of the kingdom of heaven, while an upright man who refused to believe should be forever damned? The doctrine was contrary to all ideas of justice.

"Human justice differs from divine justice," replied the bishop.

Then he repeated the parable of the prodigal son. Isaac listened attentively, but could not repress a smile at the strange moral.

"We believe," said the priest, "that the angels in heaven experience more joy over one sinner that repents than over ninety-nine that need no repentance."

Isaac opened his eyes wide.

"Is that a doctrine of your church?" he asked.

"It is one of the greatest and most sublime."

"Then I, who have sinned and repent, am theoretic-

ally better in the eyes of the heavenly hosts than if I had never done wrong?"

"Yes, if you repent through Christ."

"Your reverence," said Isaac, earnestly, "let me understand you beyond the possibility of a mistake. My life and happiness are in the balance, and I do not wish to pin my faith to a misapprehension. If I had remained righteous and had committed no crime, I would not afford the Lord as much pleasure and satisfaction as I do at present, since I have sinned and repented."

"Yes, if you repent, believing in Christ," answered the priest.

"Even if my crime is that of murder?"

"Even then. There is no sin which the Saviour does not wipe out with his blood."

"I cannot understand it," replied Isaac, dejectedly. "It is all so contrary to human ideas of right and justice."

"You do not view the matter with the eyes of faith," said the bishop, encouragingly. "Once be baptized, and you will see it in its true and wonderful light."

The subject offered a fruitful source of discussion for the rest of the morning; but, in spite of the religious conviction of the bishop and the glowing enthusiasm of the priest, Isaac's mind still refused to perceive the truth, which was so very evident to his instructors.

When the Jew had departed, the prelates remained together in earnest consultation.

"One thing is evident," said the bishop. "Schwartz has committed some crime little short of murder. It is

not love for our religion, but remorse and an accusing conscience which is urging him to us, in hopes of finding consolation, which his own religion is incapable of giving."

"Oh, if God were to touch his heart!" replied the priest, with uplifted eyes. "If the love of Christ would but enter his soul!"

"How blessed it is," said Bishop Keane, "to bring one soul back from the precipice over which it is madly plunging, and to lead it to eternal happiness! I will not rest until I have accomplished the conversion of this man, and we will make it a condition of his acceptance that his wife and children be also baptized."

"I think we may count upon a speedy victory," replied Father Kelly; and the friends separated.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE STRUGGLE.

“Your learning, like the lunar beam, affords  
Light, but not heat. It leaves you undevout,  
Frozen at heart, while speculation shines.”—*Young*.

As soon as Isaac reached the street his indecision again mastered him. The enormity of his undertaking, of his contemplated crime, arose before his mind's eye; for was it not a crime to abjure his religion for that of his adversaries? He did not return at once to his house, but walked out into the suburbs, where he could think and reflect undisturbed, under the blue canopy of heaven.

It was a bright day, warm for that season of the year—one of those delightful days of “Indian Summer.” There had been no rain for several weeks, and the road was dusty. The grass still looked fresh and green, but the trees that bordered the road and the bushes that grew along the path were turning sere and yellow, giving unmistakable evidence of the coming of winter. The wild-flowers had long since faded, and the sweet season of hope seemed to have died with them.

The golden sunlight lay across the road, but Schwartz did not observe it. There was a chill in his breast, as though winter were already there, with its frost and

desolation. It seemed long, long since he had known the summer of contentment, the sunshine of happiness.

As he strode along, unmindful of the beauties of the scene, his brain was busy with a serious train of thought.

“Believe in Christ?” he muttered. “Can I believe in him? Does not every fibre in me cry out against this apostasy? Did not Jehovah proclaim, ‘I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt not have other gods before me’? And shall I now deny my ancient faith, the holy law, the glorious belief in an only God, the love of my race, and bow before this deity of the Christians? Shall I trample under foot my home, my family, my nationality, the thousand ceremonials which are still dear to me, and seek admittance to a creed which has for eighteen hundred years oppressed and maltreated my people? Shall I foreswear the religion which I have sucked in with my mother’s milk, which I have learned from my parents’ lips, and which I have in turn taught my children—a religion which God himself proclaimed from Sinai, and which to-day forms the foundation of all social welfare? Shall I throw aside my Judaism, and supplant it with a religion born but yesterday, and whose dogmas I find it difficult to understand? Shall I deny my God, and in his stead worship a man of my own race, a persecuted and crucified Hebrew? No, it can never be! It was but an idle dream. The power I worship is the God of my ancestors, omnipotent Jehovah, who created this glorious world, who made a covenant with Abraham, who led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and gave the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai. Such a great

God need not come to earth to die in human form. Such a God can forgive his children without the intervention of a redeemer."

Isaac walked on hastily and gave free vent to his musings. A thrush sang cheerily in a near-by tree, but the music had not the power to divert his thoughts.

"And why should I change?" he said. "What power compels me to seek these priests? Can they exorcise the spectre of a murdered man, which forever haunts me? My religion teaches that I must live down my crime and do penance for it. They would have me admit that blind belief in their God will absolve me and purify my soul. What if I embrace their faith, and, after severing the bonds which unite me with my people, my agony and my remorse still remain? What if I find I have been pursuing a forlorn hope? A thousand times better to remain a Jew, surrender to the authorities and do penance for my crime."

After a while he turned his steps homeward, but shuddered at the thought of the new mental torture which awaited him there. What if this new religion were able to afford relief after all?

"Oh, God!" he sobbed, "why am I such a coward? Why have I not the moral courage to end my torments by a decisive resolution? Guide me, oh, God, to the right path! Where shall I look for salvation? where for peace of mind?"

Still undecided, still hovering between two creeds, Isaac reached his home in time for dinner. A hearty meal, a loving kiss and a happy smile awaited him, and

he strove to drive away his dismal thoughts. After dinner he went into the garden with his wife and children. Here all was happiness and contentment. Why should he not be happy, too? He made an effort to cast off his doubts and perplexities and romped with his boy in almost childish glee. Lena had not seen him so jolly in weeks, and she heralded this change as a favorable symptom. She knew not that it was assumed to hide his torments.

At the end of an hour Rabbi Kauffman came into the garden, unannounced, and found him surrounded by his family.

"My dear Schwartz," he said, "it is so long since I have seen you that I thought you had emigrated."

Schwartz made a vague reply, and Lena, with a word of welcome, offered to relieve the visitor of his hat and cane.

"No, thank you," he said; "I can stay but a minute. I came strictly on business. I have just discovered a destitute family—father, mother, and five children. The poor fellow has had no work for six weeks. He is too proud to beg, and if I hadn't heard of him I think they might have died of starvation. I fixed them temporarily, as well as I could. The man is a carpenter by trade, and says if he could get a set of tools he might earn a comfortable living."

"How much will he require?"

"Twenty dollars, at least."

Isaac took a roll of bills from his pocket and counted thirty dollars into the Rabbi's hand.

"Here are ten dollars additional for provisions," he said.

"Really, Schwartz, this is too generous," cried the delighted Rabbi.

"Nonsense! There is quite a balance in my ledger still owing to the poor."

"Then, while you are in the mood," said the Rabbi, smiling, "I'll take the liberty of speaking of another matter. That project of building a more desirable synagogue has been dying of inanition. You are the man to revive it. Head a list with a liberal amount, and I am sure that the others will follow."

Isaac reflected for a moment.

"Yes," he said, "we need a new building. The gallery is very insecure and may fall any day. If it does, we will reproach ourselves with neglect. Draw up the petition, Rabbi, and I will put down my name for five thousand dollars."

The Rabbi arose and shook Isaac's hand enthusiastically.

"You are a noble Jew," he cried, "and Judaism has need of such men as you."

Isaac grew very red and abruptly changed the conversation.

On the verge of apostasy the compliment seemed a mockery, and he smarted under the kindly words.

Scarcely had the Rabbi gone before Mr. Blumen, who had been elected secretary of the Hebrew Relief Society, entered. There was a meeting to be called to devise means of replenishing the empty treasury. Several sick emigrants required immediate aid, and there were no funds in sight. Isaac drew a check for a hundred dollars.



"There," he said, "this will tide you over until the next regular meeting. Then we will find a way for raising the needed money."

Mr. Blumen was overjoyed. He had secretly contributed liberally from his own pocket, but the demand was ever increasing.

"Ah, friend Schwartz," he said, with sincere admiration, "I wish there were more Jews like you in the city. You are a credit to the name of Israel." And he, too, left.

Lena had never felt so proud of her husband. She lovingly placed her arm about his shoulders and kissed him.

"My dear," she said, "how happy you must feel in doing so much good. The Rabbi was right; our race has need of such men as you, for, as all Jews are apt to be censured for the faults of the individuals, so the good deeds of one pass to the credit of the entire race."

Isaac winced. He had not the courage to meet his wife's honest glance.

"She speaks truly," he muttered. "The Jews need me; and I thought for a moment of deserting them! It was a dream. It is all over. I am a Jew, and shall remain a Jew to the end."

This resolution once taken, Isaac felt contented for the remainder of the day; but the reaction, as usual, set in. Every hour of happiness was counterbalanced by two of remorse and grief.

The next day was the Sabbath, and Isaac went with his wife and sister to the synagogue. He was in no very happy frame of mind, for his sleep had been broken

by distressing dreams. The sermon of Rabbi Kauffman, based upon a text from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, had the effect of deepening the gloom which enshrouded his soul. He tried to shake off his sorrow, but the more he reflected, the greater became his perturbation. The apparition of his victim stood by his side, and his anxiety increased as the day lengthened. These fits of gloomy despondency were becoming alarmingly frequent. Time, instead of mitigating his remorse, only served to intensify it. It is a difficult matter to thoroughly grasp the strange reasoning of this conscience-coward. The hidden mental pathways leading to his distorted reflections, the discordant chords set in vibration by his acute suffering, all were at variance with the course of thought and action of a healthy intellect. He was a "Laocoon," writhing in the coils of a huge serpent, which was surely but unrelentingly crushing out his vitality, sapping his very life. His mind had brooded over his crime until the brain had, in a measure, become diseased, and when once the terrors of self-reproach seized upon him, he found it impossible to shake them off. Had Isaac possessed the decision to confess his crime, and the moral courage to do penance for it, this constantly growing morbidness would have been checked; but, as we have seen, he was a moral poltroon, and Sweeny's phantom had taken such hold upon his imagination that no ordinary power could exorcise it.

Isaac's misery continued during the entire Sabbath day, and, in place of relief, evening brought but a hideous nightmare, in which the awful tragedy was

re-enacted, and from which the culprit awoke with a cry of agony.

He awoke on a beautiful autumn Sunday morning. The warm sun shone cheerfully into his room, but its glorious rays brought no comfort to his troubled spirit. He arose and looked into the street. People were swarming past the house on their way to church.

"These folks have no worry, no anxiety concerning their souls," thought Schwartz. "They are Christians and are confident of salvation."

How he envied them! He ate his breakfast listlessly; then, for want of a better occupation, he took up his hat, and going out, mingled with the crowd and followed them into church. Cushioned benches and beautifully painted windows attracted his eye. A great organ pealed forth its solemn prelude, and a choir sang superbly. This was so much more beautiful than his own dingy synagogue. It was an Episcopalian church into which chance had led him.

The minister ascended the pulpit and announced the lesson for the day. He read a grand old Jewish psalm, which Isaac had so often admired. The blood of the man who had written it was, perhaps, flowing through his own veins. The prayer that followed had so many allusions to the God of Israel that Isaac looked around in surprise. Was it a mistake, or was it hypocrisy? Were they worshipping the same God in the same way that his forefathers had done, or was it all a dream?

Now the sermon began. Strangely enough, the subject was "The Prodigal Son." There were glaring inconsistencies, statements as to the motives and secret

desires of God, which would have made Isaac smile, had he been in a less serious mood. There were misinterpretations of words which were clearly meant to be taken literally. Some statements appeared as the wildest forms of sophistry, devoid of any practical meaning. Still it was an interesting sermon. The subject was treated in a different manner from that of Bishop Keane, yet it conveyed the same moral—the salvation of the sinner through the power of faith. The congregation evidently believed in it, and was happy.

Isaac left at the conclusion of the service.

"They all teach the same doctrine," he murmured. "Can such a beautiful structure have a lie for its foundation?"

Perhaps it was true, after all, and his doubts were but the result of a perverted intellect. Isaac spent an anxious day, hovering, as it were, between two creeds, and incapable of arriving at a decision.

Night again brought sleeplessness and despair. The ghost of Sweeny stood mercilessly at his side. The harassed culprit seemed to hear the apparition whisper into his ear:

"Become a Catholic. Abjure your ancient and obsolete religion, and enter the alone-saving church. You murdered me, a Catholic, and only by bringing a new soul into the holy faith can you hope for peace."

The morning found him feverish. The question of baptism engrossed his every thought. He arose and sought forgetfulness in his business, but the subject seemed to grow upon him momentarily. It gave him no rest. Why could not Judaism offer him so com-

forting a solution, so easy an atonement, as Christianity?

He was several times on the point of running to the priest's and crying :

"Take me ; I will be baptized."

He as often checked himself with the thought :

"I cannot believe what they tell me, and without faith they promise no salvation."

His brain was on fire, his temples were throbbing with a consuming emotion. Mechanically he took up the morning paper and cast his eye negligently over its pages.

"Murderer Hung !" was the heading which suddenly attracted his attention. With feverish excitement he ran his eyes over the column. Anything relating to murder had a horrible fascination for him, and he was in the habit of perusing accounts of executions with a morbid curiosity which added greatly to his mental tortures.

The article in question was about a wretch who had foully murdered his wife, had been absolved from sin just before his execution, and impudently expressed on the scaffold a regret that he would not meet his wife in heaven, as she had died unprepared, and was doomed to eternal punishment, while he had had his sins forgiven and was sure of celestial glory.

Isaac read this account, in all its repellent details, three or four times before he could grasp its import.

"No," he cried at length, "I cannot believe that this is a teaching of Christianity. It is impossible that I could subscribe to such a doctrine. To me it seems but



a travesty on God's mercy, a superstition to which men have given the name of Religion. Such a creed can bring no comfort to my miserable soul, for my mind would refuse to give it credence. But if I reject the idea of baptism, what then? There is but one alternative—a full confession to my wife and to the authorities, and expiation before the law. Which shall it be?"

Sad and dejected, he put on his hat and went into the street. He could think better in the open air, where everything spoke to him of the greatness and goodness of God. He wandered about aimlessly till noon, and returned to his home as irresolute as he had departed.

Still plunged in deep meditation, he turned the corner leading to his house. Walking slowly towards him, but seemingly unconscious of his proximity, came his sister Bertha, at the side of August Kern. She was chatting gaily, while he gazed into her bright eyes with a longing which too clearly betrayed his feelings towards the girl. She was evidently explaining something to him, and he was listening intently. Presently Bertha saw her brother and smiled, while August blushed like a detected schoolboy, and lifted his hat.

"Where are you going, Bertha?" asked Isaac, assuming a severe tone.

"On an errand."

"Shall I go with you?"

"No; August will accompany me. Lena is waiting for you at home."

Isaac felt ill at ease. He turned slowly homeward, while the two resumed their walk.

"This is getting serious," he said, moodily. "The

evenings are no longer sufficient, but they must meet during the day. What if Lena were right, and they loved each other? My God, it would be horrible! I would never consent—never! Father confided her to my care, and I am responsible for her welfare. This intimacy must end. I shall speak to Bertha as soon as possible.”

He arrived home in no very roseate humor, and Bertha came in a few minutes later. There was nothing said on the subject at the time, as Isaac wanted to reserve his reproaches until he saw his sister alone. The dinner progressed in comparative silence, except for the prattle of the children. The others were busy with their own thoughts.

The meeting between Kern and Bertha had been purely accidental. On his way from the shop to his home, the young man had unexpectedly met his beloved and had asked permission to accompany her. He had much to tell her, and he begged her to appoint an evening when he could meet her, as of old. August could brook no further delay. He was desperately in love. The autumn sunsets, the balmy breezes, the music of the teeming world about him, all spoke to his soul of Bertha. Her words were as caresses to him, and he cherished her every utterance, as of an oracle, with a religious devotion. He was amazed at the force with which this passion had taken possession of him. It grew with an over-mastering power, and was no longer to be resisted. The fact that he had been forcibly separated from her had but added fuel to the flame. Poor August, sighing indeed like a furnace, had made

several attempts to see her during the previous week, but, by a strange fatality, her evenings had been uniformly engaged. Lena, feeling that further appeals to her preoccupied husband were useless, had resolved, as we have seen, to take the matter into her own hands, and to prevent what seemed to her the most terrible of all calamities—a marriage between Bertha and a Gentile. She kept them apart by inventing little visits for her sister-in-law, and dragged the poor girl out into society every evening, much against her inclination.

But Kern would endure it no longer. He had besought Bertha for an interview, and she had promised him to be at home that evening. He would throw himself at her feet and beseech her to make him the happiest of mortals. To do Kern justice, he had no doubt as to the result—not through a too exalted idea as to his worth, but because he felt that so great a love as his must have kindled a kindred love in the girl's heart. Joyous at the near realization of his hopes, he whistled merrily as he turned his steps homeward.

His mother sat at home, waiting impatiently for August to arrive. From time to time she took up a letter which lay in her lap and read it over. Then she laid it down with a sigh.

"What will my boy say?" she murmured. "I would be satisfied with the change, if he were."

The outer door opened and a well-known step in the hall announced her beloved son.

"Mother," he cried, joyfully, kissing her, "I have kept you waiting. Forgive me. I met somebody in the road, with whom I conversed for a while."

His gaiety betrayed him.

"Do you mean Bertha Schwartz?"

"Yes, mother. It is the first meeting I have had with her for almost a week."

The old lady frowned, in evident displeasure.

"Here, my son, read this," she said, after a pause, during which August removed his hat and tidied his clothing.

The letter was from Mrs. Kern's younger brother, who had established himself in a Southern city and was doing a thriving business. It began by telling of the marvelous growth of the town and of his business, and ended by extending a hearty invitation to his sister and to August to come and live with him.

"You will like it here," said the writer. "The Southerners are very hospitable, and will extend you a cordial welcome. I must have some one to assist me, as I have too much work for one to superintend, and August is just the man I require. I promise him a good salary, and at the end of the year an interest in the business. Do not hesitate, but let me have your consent at once."

August silently handed the letter back to his mother.

"What do you say, my boy?" asked the old lady, half timidly, half beseechingly.

"I cannot go, mother."

"Why not? Your position at the factory is not lucrative. You cannot earn more than enough to support your old mother and yourself, and I've heard you say more than once that your chances for advancement were not encouraging."

"I know it; but I cannot leave the city," replied August, with decision.

"Why not, my son?"

"It would mean to leave her, and I cannot think of that."

"Do you mean the Jewess?"

August nodded assent.

"My son," said his mother, tenderly, taking his hand, "for that very reason I desire you to go away. I believe your uncle's letter was inspired by a special providence, to take you away from her influence."

August sprang up angrily. All his tenderness to his well-beloved parent vanished at the implied opposition.

"To hear you speak like that, one would think she were a devil, instead of the angel that she is," he said.

"She may be the angel that you believe, but she is not the bride for you. If your poor father were alive, do you think he would consent to your marrying a Jewess—you, a Roman Catholic? She is beneath you."

August laughed bitterly.

"Beneath me!" he cried. "I would to God she were not so far above me."

"In what, my boy?"

"In wealth, in intelligence, in goodness of heart."

"But think of her religion. She denies the Saviour. For her there is no heaven—only hell."

"Inventions of fanatical priests!" cried August, striding up and down the little room. "I'll never believe that God created so divine a soul to be damned forever. You don't believe it yourself."

"My son," cried the poor mother, in pious amaze-



ment, "are you out of your senses? Why, your very admiration for this Jewess has brought you to blasphemy."

"Do not you and all good Catholics worship a Jewess?" he said, halting a moment before his mother. "Was not Mary of the same race? And I warrant no better or purer than the maiden I worship. And was not Jesus a Jew? Can the Jews be so very inferior to us, when they give us the highest ideals of goodness and wisdom?"

"August," cried the unhappy mother, with tears standing in her eyes, "do not speak that way; it is a sin."

August knew not what to reply. He had never antagonized his mother before, and it went to his heart to think that he was the cause of her tears. After a pause, she said:

"Tell me one thing. Have you spoken to this—to Bertha? Does she know of your love for her?"

"No, mother, I have as yet said nothing. But she must know it instinctively."

"Better leave it unsaid. She will not have you, and even if she would consent, her brother would refuse. Oh, you do not know how tenaciously these Jews cling to their religion, and how they hate the Christians. They will associate with them in matters of business, but once propose matrimony, and they would rather see their dearest child in the grave than the wife of a non-Jew."

"Mother, you exaggerate."

"Not at all. I have seen it in Europe. I have

seen a Jewish girl marry a Christian young man in our village, as fine a fellow as ever lived, and her parents sat in sackcloth and ashes, and bewailed her as though she were dead."

"They were fanatics," cried August, in indignation, resuming his impatient walk up and down the room.

"Not more so than others. Catholics and Jews are like oil and water; they can never mix. Suppose you married her. What does she know of the blessed Saviour, of the Holy Virgin and the saints? On your Sabbath she would work, and your holidays would be indifferent to her. On the other hand, her ways would be as strange and uncongenial to you. It won't do, my boy; there would be nought but unhappiness and distress."

"I can become a Jew," answered the young man, in despair.

"August, my son! Do you want to bring your mother to the grave? You a Jew! Deny the Saviour and become an outcast from the holy church? Do you know what you are saying?" And her tears gushed forth copiously.

"There, there, mother, don't cry; I did not mean it."

"Become a Jew!" continued the old lady, working herself into a righteous passion, and sobbing as though her heart would break. "Would there be any happiness for me in heaven while I knew you to be suffering in purgatory for your apostasy? Dear Jesus, help him cast out the devil that is tempting him. My son, ask Jesus to help you."

She was desperately in earnest and sank upon her

knees in supplication. August, too, was moved. Perhaps his mother was right, and he had better go away.

"Give her up," pleaded the old lady—"give her up, for my sake."

"I can't promise. I love her, mother—oh, how I love her! What do I care for religion? Her love will be a religion to me—all I need."

"No, no! Nothing but harm can come of it," sobbed the old lady. "Accept your uncle's proposition, and let us go to him. Take my advice, August, and give her up. Think of my unhappiness, if not of your own future misery."

For awhile the poor lad paced on silently. Finally he said, dejectedly:

"Come, mother dear, dry your eyes, and let us have dinner. I must go back to work. Let the matter rest for the present. I shall think it over before I say anything to her."

At the table both were busy with their unhappy reflections. August's mind was in too much of a whirl to be capable of formulating any definite plan; but he finally concluded, in spite of his mother's well-meant advice, to call on Bertha that evening, acknowledge his passion, explain his position, and leave his future in her hands. What, indeed, could an old lady of seventy know of the overwhelming power of love?

Kern was perturbed all the afternoon. His mind was confused by the rush of conflicting sentiments, and he accomplished but a sorry day's work.

Isaac Schwartz, on his side, was no less perturbed; but with him it was not love, but an equally serious

question—religion—which was the disturbing factor. He forgot both Kern and Bertha, and locking himself in his room—for he had need of solitude—he fought a valiant fight over ground which has for centuries been the battle-field of contending creeds. Why should he place blind credence in the theories of priests? He would investigate and find the truth unaided.

“I will try to discover for myself,” he said, “whether the doctrines taught by Father Kelly are true or false. If I find them true, I will be baptized without further hesitation, and in spite of all my scruples. If not, I shall work out my salvation according to my own Jewish faith. If God has proclaimed salvation through his crucified Son, then the important fact must have been heralded to the world in a manner which the humblest and most ignorant of men may understand. The Bible will tell me what I want to know. It must contain inherent evidence of the truth or falsity of the dogmas it teaches. Why should I take the word of priests? I can read as well as they, and can draw my own conclusions.”

Eagerly but methodically he scanned the pages of the Old and New Testament; but alas! instead of finding proof, his doubts increased. What was interpreted by the church to prophesy the coming of the Redeemer assumed quite another meaning to his analytical mind. He read with the eyes of reason, not of faith. He saw in the prophets but an account of the events that were about to happen in the household of Israel, but no allusion to an eventual Redeemer. The Evangelists appeared to him full of contradictions on most vital

points, and far from convincing where they agreed. In the utterances of Jesus he heard only an echo of the teachings of many Jewish sages, but nowhere did he find the conviction of Christ's divinity.

All afternoon he sat in deep study, searching in vain for a way out of the chaotic doubt in which he floundered. The Man-God became in his eyes but a good and righteous Jew, who taught humility and love, and who would have become one of Israel's great Rabbis had not the ambition of his misguided followers delivered him into the hands of the Roman oppressors.

"I do not wonder," he thought, "that Christians admire the character of Jesus. He was a noble and virtuous man—a Jew, in the best sense of the word. If they worshiped him as a righteous man and strove to emulate his life, I could find it rational; but to raise him to the dignity of a God, to make him appear at once a man and a divinity, born on purpose to be sacrificed because mankind would not or could not abstain from wrongdoing, this is incomprehensible to me."

So Isaac sat and pondered, without taking heed of the flight of time. He had long ago lit his lamp. His wife had repeatedly knocked at his door, but he refused to open it.

"Leave me alone, Lena," he cried. "I am occupied."

"But supper is ready."

"I don't want any. I have no time for supper."

Several times during the evening she sought admission, but always with the same result.

"Isaac," she cried, at last, "you must open. I have something important to tell you."



He scarcely heard her voice, so absorbed was he in his meditations; and his wife retired, uneasy and discouraged, to seek comfort and consolation with Bertha.

Isaac continued to read, but it was no longer the New Testament from which he sought instruction. By accident he took up a Protestant book, in which the Catholic creed was unmercifully condemned. He glanced at Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, which was filled with tales of cruelty practiced in the name of Jesus. He read passages in Boulanger's *Life of Paul*, which cast serious aspersions upon the writers of the Bible. The more he read, the more indignant he became with himself for having dreamed of deserting his own religion for one which his troubled spirit failed to understand.

Pushing aside his books at length, he cried, "I was on the point of embracing this faith, of accepting the doctrines which Father Kelly taught me; but believe in them I never can. He may find consolation in them; I cannot."

Presently he arose and paced the room with growing agitation.

"Father Kelly is now waiting for me to signify my intention of becoming a Christian," he murmured. "Even if it appealed to my intelligence, how could I ever surrender to the church which has persecuted, outraged and debased the Jews since it came into existence—the church which, in every country on the face of the earth, has tortured and robbed us—which has forced us into ghettos and compelled us to wear the badge of disgrace—which has torn us on the rack, burned us at the stake and exiled us ignominiously, when there was

nothing left for it to take? Can I now crawl on my knees to this church and beg to be accepted as a convert? Can I kneel to the Christ, in whose name all these cruelties have been heaped upon my race, and humbly ask for salvation? Can I kiss the hand that has so cruelly smitten my unfortunate people? Almighty God, guard me from such a step! For a brief moment, my remorse, the agony of my soul, caused me to neglect my family, my religion, my nationality, and seek for consolation in a church which I can never revere."

Isaac walked up and down his room with clenched fists and furrowed brow, a prey to violent emotion. It was a Titanic struggle, in which cowardice and resolution fought for the mastery.

"My family!" he continued, bitterly. "Were I to take such a step, my family would deny me. My pious father and mother, if they heard of it, would put ashes on their heads and say 'Kaddisch' for me. Shame and mortification would follow them and render their lives a burden, and grief would hurry them to the grave."

The picture was harrowing to Isaac. He beat his breast and bit his lips, as he thought of the misery his apostasy would cause.

"And Lena," he cried. "My God, what would my poor wife do if I were to become a Christian? Would she not execrate me and curse the day she left her father's roof to follow me? Would she not teach her children to despise their unnatural father, who had cast off his religion and capitulated to the enemy? Would she not leave me in abhorrence and loathe my

very name? What can Lena know of my daily and hourly agony? She would see in my apostasy but unpardonable treason. She has no cause to be dissatisfied with the teachings of Judaism. She finds her happiness in them; and while I sought salvation in the new religion, she would die of grief and despair. This religion, according to its doctrines, would open for me the gates of heaven, while my beloved wife and children, being unbaptized, would linger forever in the torments of hell. Could this be happiness for me?"

"Adonai, Adonai!" he cried, in his despair. "Why hast thou sent me this mental anguish? Why hast thou caused me to waver in my belief? Give me strength to fight the battle. Grant me atonement for my crime. Exorcise the phantom which is forever pursuing me. Let me find salvation and peace in my own time-honored religion. Lead me to victory over my guilt-stained conscience. Let me again find happiness as a Jew."

In his agitation Isaac threw himself face downward on the bed and groaned and writhed in agony. Long lay he there. A series of dismal pictures passed slowly through his brain. He saw the countless persecutions of the Jews by the early Christians; he saw the cruelties practiced upon the defenceless Hebrews during the Crusades; he saw the bloodshed and tortures of the Inquisition, the rack, the pinion, the dungeon and the stake; he saw the cruel expatriation of the Jews from Spain and France; he saw the ceaseless misery inflicted upon the Israelites in Germany, in Austria, in Poland and in Russia; he saw the hatred, the antagonism, the intolerance everywhere displayed towards the despised

and misunderstood Hebrew. The pictures rankled in his soul and brought the hot blood surging to his cheeks.

He strode to the window and threw it wide open. Grateful was the cooling breeze that blew in from the river. It bathed his heated brow and brought a momentary surcease from the mental torture he endured. Stars were still shining in the sky, but the horizon was streaked with the first tinge of gray, the herald of a new morning.

"How beautiful is the universe!" he murmured. "How wonderful! How expressive of the greatness and omnipotence of God! Everything is formed for the welfare of God's creatures, and yet how little does man understand the art of finding happiness! Religion, springing as it does from a love and reverence for the Creator, instead of acting as a blessing to humanity, more often becomes a curse. Man busies himself with an empty form, an abstract idea, and entirely loses sight of the fundamental idea that God is a loving father, and all mankind are his children. How vast is this universe! The earth is but an atom among the hosts of worlds that crowd the canopy of heaven, and yet impotent man, in his conceit, would teach that the Almighty Creator of this wondrous system has singled out this insignificant planet on which to live, suffer and die. How strange such a doctrine would sound to the Christians, were they to hear of it for the first time as having existed among a primitive race! It would take its rank with Grecian mythology and with the Saxon Sagas; and yet daily association with the idea has made it appear plausible to millions of intelligent beings.

God is no revengeful, unforgiving, capricious ruler, condemning his handiwork to-day and forgiving to-morrow. There can be but one true religion—that which teaches that God is the Lord of the universe; that our lives, our destinies, are in his hands, and that our deeds alone will influence our happiness here and our salvation hereafter.”

Isaac gazed long and prayerfully toward the rising sun, and instinctively the Hebrew morning prayer rose to his lips. It was long since he had repeated it. It brought a strange sense of relief.

“Hear, oh, Israel!” he cried, with exaltation, “the Lord our God is an only God. Surely the God of Israel has some comfort for the repentant sinner. I will seek it. Had I sought for salvation in my own religion as industriously as I have examined into the mysteries of Christianity, I should have found it long ago. I will confide in my wife; will tell my story to the Rabbi, and will find atonement in Judaism. Then will I expiate my crime according to my country’s laws, and will emerge from the ordeal a happy man, and, with God’s help, a devout Jew.”



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE PROPOSAL.

"Love is begot by fancy, bred  
By ignorance, by expectation fed,  
Destroyed by knowledge, and at best  
Lost in the moment 'tis possessed."

—*Lord Lansdown.*

WHILE Isaac was thus engrossed with his religious speculations, his sister Bertha and August Kern were discussing the same subject in a different manner. The young lady, as we know, had promised her admirer an interview during the evening; and Kern, in considerable mental trepidation, called at her home. As usual, Lena did her utmost to keep the couple apart, but her misguided efforts were evidently not appreciated. Kern, preparatory to proposing marriage, proposed a short walk. Bertha accepted, and the discomfited Lena was left alone to meditate upon the uncertainty of human projects. Had not Mrs. Franzman dropped in by accident, it would have proved an uncomfortable evening for Lena.

To August Kern it seemed as though all the realities of his life depended on this interview. He could conceive of no future without Bertha, no happiness if she rejected him. His mother's objections and fears all vanished from his mind as soon as he was in Bertha's presence. He felt but one thing—that he adored her.

"You have something to say to me, August," suggested Bertha, as they walked along, arm in arm.

"Yes," stammered the young man. "It is possible that I may leave this place."

"Indeed? I shall be very sorry," said Bertha, earnestly.

"Will it grieve you very much?"

"Yes, August. We have been good friends, and I should regret to have you leave. Where are you going?"

"It depends upon you whether I go or remain," stammered August.

"On me?" cried Bertha, in surprise.

"Yes. Is it possible, Bertha, that you haven't understood me—that you do not know I love you?"

"You love me?" asked Bertha, with a shade of sadness in her voice. "I am a Jewess, and you—"

"A Catholic. Well, what of it? I love you all the same. I have loved you ever since we met. Has religion the power to tear two loving souls asunder?"

Bertha relinquished his arm.

"Indeed, I am very sorry," she said, simply.

"Sorry for what?"

"That you allowed your feelings to carry you so far, and that I innocently encouraged you."

"Then you do not care for me?"

"Yes, as much as for any one, except my family. But that is not love. I can only give my heart to one of my own race."

"If you loved me you could not speak so. You

would brave everything to be mine," said August, bitterly.

"Listen, August. I admire you greatly. We have been excellent friends, but no thought of your seriously loving me ever entered my mind. If it had, I should have avoided you."

"Avoided me," said the young man, deeply hurt. "Why? Am I so far beneath you?"

"Not that, August. You are my superior in most things. But you know I was brought up an orthodox Jewess. My father is very pious and clings to the tenets of his religion. It would grieve him if I were to marry a Christian."

"And do you think as he does on the subject of religion?"

"These ideas are inborn, August. We cannot root them out."

For awhile neither spoke. Finally August asked:

"Is it perhaps because I am poor that you refuse? I have little, it is true, but I am in a position to support a wife comfortably. I have secretly toiled and saved for you, Bertha, hoping some day to make you my wife."

"I do not care for money. Wealth would never influence me in the choice of a husband. But I am afraid it can never be. Even if I should consent, my brother would withhold his approval."

"But if he were satisfied, would you allow me to woo you until I had taught you to love me?"

"It would not be a difficult lesson, for I like you very much; but he will not consent."

A ray of hope lit up the young man's face as he took her hand.

"Thank you for that," he said. "I shall speak to Isaac to-morrow."

"You know, August," said the maiden, endeavoring to soften the blow, "according to our European training, we have little voice in the matter of marriage. The proper bridegroom is selected for us, and we have only to obey. You will never get my father's or my brother's consent. I am sure I could be happy at your side if you were a Jew, but I am too dutiful a daughter to cause my father so great a grief as such an alliance would bring to him."

August found nothing to reply. Perhaps she was right. Had not his mother spoken in the same way? Was not Bertha reading him a much-needed lesson in filial duty? Silently and sorrowfully the couple returned to their homes. All the joy seemed to have gone out of Kern's life.

"To-morrow," whispered August, on parting—"to-morrow will decide my fate—will make me miserable or happy for life."

"And should Isaac refuse, August, take my word for it, it will be for the best. Do not grieve. In a matter of such grave importance, the heart should not be hearkened to until the intellect has been consulted."

Mrs. Franzman had just left, and Bertha found Lena alone. Woman-like, she at once poured her story into Lena's eager ear, and her tears flowed abundantly.

"And you did not suspect that he loved you?" asked Lena.

"How could I? Do you think that I would have encouraged him? I merely looked upon him as a good friend; and now I really believe I am beginning to care for him."

"Don't say that, Bertha, for the sake of all you hold dear. Steel your heart against this feeling. It will end in no good. Isaac will never consent to such a union. The knowledge that Mr. Kern was paying you serious attentions caused me many a sleepless night. Be a sensible girl, and stifle whatever affection you have in your heart for him."

"I suppose it is my duty to do so," said the girl, sorrowfully.

"There's another young man I know of," said Lena, with assumed levity, "who loves you just as much, to judge from his attentions, and who is a far more desirable suitor. It is not a question of a momentary pleasure; the happiness of a lifetime depends upon your decision."

"I understand you, dear, and know that you are right; but I am grieved, nevertheless."

"For yourself?" asked Lena.

"For August. He appeared so dejected."

"He will recover. Better a moment of sorrow than a lifetime of regret."

Bertha kissed her sister good-night and retired to reflect in the seclusion of her room.

On the following morning Lena found her husband in a state of alarming disorder. It was evident that he had not slept all night, and he was in a wretched humor. It was an inopportune time to discuss so important a



subject as Bertha's future, but the poor woman was impatient to unbosom herself of the troublesome secret.

"Can you listen to me a moment, Isaac?" she said, after she had expressed her surprise at her husband's haggard appearance.

"Well, what is it?"

"The worst has come to pass. August Kern has proposed marriage to Bertha."

Isaac sprang up in anger.

"Must this happen to me, too?" he exclaimed. "Have I not trouble enough, without this? Oh, God, how hast thou punished me!"

"Blame yourself, Isaac, and not God. I warned you often enough, and if you had not been so blind, you would have noticed it for yourself."

"And does she love him?"

"I think not. She does not know her own mind. August will be here to-day to see you and get his answer."

"He shall never have her—never! Do you hear me? I am responsible to her father for her welfare, and you know what it would mean to him if she were to marry a Gentile. Are there no young men of our faith, that she should become enamoured of a Catholic?"

"It is your own fault, Isaac. You shut yourself up with your books and left her to her own devices. Instead of putting an end to Kern's visits when I warned you, you simply allowed matters to take their course. I did all I could to prevent it. It is all your fault."

Isaac stormed like a madman at this accusation. Good

God! was he to have another crime fastened upon his shoulders? Had he not enough to bear? No, this marriage should not take place. He would prevent it, by fair means or foul.

"Send Bertha to me," he cried. "I must speak to her. She will listen to reason."

Bertha soon appeared. She, too, had passed a sleepless night. Isaac became calmer at her aspect. He seized her hand and gazed long and lovingly into her eyes.

"Bertha, tell me," he asked; "you do not love him? You do not want to marry him?"

"I like him, but had no thought of love," she answered.

"My dear, it would break my heart to see you wedded to a Christian. The blame would be mine. Your father would die of grief, and, in dying, would curse us both. Could you be happy with your father's curse resting on you?"

Bertha sighed, but did not reply.

"Tell him frankly that you cannot marry him. You will soon learn to forget him."

"Why would it be so wrong, Isaac, for me to marry a Gentile?" asked the girl.

"It is because of the difference in our religious beliefs. We have but one God, while they worship a Jew, whom they call the Son of God, and a Jewess, whom they call the Mother of God. You would never understand it, my dear, and it would make you very unhappy."

"But, laying religion aside, could we not be happy together?"

"You cannot lay your religion aside. It is a part of yourself. I speak from experience. I have tried very hard to become a Catholic, and am now more a Jew than ever."

"You?"

"Yes. I'll tell you all about it some day."

"But he loves me."

"He must learn to forget you. Listen, Bertha! You know Joe Labeman?"

"The widower? Yes."

"He is no widower, although the world thinks him so. He is divorced from his wife, who is a Gentile."

Bertha opened her eyes in amazement.

"Yes; he married her when there were few Jewish girls in this country to choose from. She was very beautiful, and he was desperately in love with her. He was a pious man, and from the day of their wedding their troubles began. She spoke of him as 'My Jew.' She laughed at his Jewish customs and ceremonials, and tried to substitute her own. His sacred holidays were neglected, while hers were religiously observed. His daughter was baptized against his express desires, and when he wanted to follow the dearest wish of his heart, and bring up his son a Jew, she objected and threatened to take her life. Ah, my dear, you will never know what the poor man suffered! One day he was taken seriously ill. They thought that death was imminent. and ten of his friends came to say the 'shema' at his bedside. I was there at the time. In one corner stood his wife, counting the beads of her rosary, praying to Jesus for help. What a moment of agony for a pious

Jew! He recovered from his illness, but his unhappiness increased, and did not cease until he obtained a divorce. I've no doubt his poor wife suffered the same torments while they lived together."

Bertha listened with all her soul. Long spoke Isaac in the same strain, using all his eloquence to convince the girl of the dreadful importance of this step. He depicted in sombre colors the grief and despair of her poor parents when they heard of it; how they would say "kaddisch," as though she were dead. His arguments were potent. Bertha, as yet, felt but friendship for her admirer; but sympathy, if left without an antidote, would soon have awakened love within her heart. Religious sentiment, however, predominated over every feeling, and, recognizing the justice of her brother's reasoning, she promised to see Kern no more.

"When he comes, brother," she added, "you must speak to him. Tell him all you have told me, and I am sure his good sense will prompt him how to act."

Isaac was in an irritable mood all day. In the light of his sister's danger, now happily averted, his own momentary alienation from Judaism appeared all the more terrible. He reproached himself bitterly for having dared to think of becoming an apostate. The advice he had given his sister, and the pictures he had drawn for her guidance, came home to him with telling force. The more he reflected, the more he became strengthened in his determination to confess his crime and take the consequences. He would wait until morning, and then put an end to indecision by confessing all to his wife and sister.

August Kern called in the evening and was at once shown up to Schwartz's room. The poor fellow had had another stormy interview with his mother, who implored him to think of the salvation of his own soul, if not of her happiness. He was in a desperate frame of mind.

The consultation was long and earnest. Isaac employed the same arguments he had used with Bertha, and added numerous incidents tending to prove that mixed marriages were rarely happy. To Kern's surprise, he confessed how he had been on the point of becoming a Christian, but how the radical differences between the two creeds had prevented the step.

"But I could become a Jew," suggested Kern, with new hope.

"No; it would be difficult. Our religion makes few proselytes. Do you know what you would be taking upon yourself by becoming a Jew? You would have to cast off all the associations which make your life pleasant, would have to abjure your Saviour and the thousand religious observances which you have been taught to revere since your birth. You would voluntarily invite the scorn of the world. You would be forced to throw your lot with a race which has for centuries been branded with the stigma of deicides, and for whom no contumely, no degradation has been thought sufficiently severe. No, friend Kern, it would be as difficult for you to become a Jew as it has been for me to become a Christian. Give up the idea. Let not love, but your good common sense, win the victory to-day. Accept your uncle's offer, and make your fortune."



Kern hung his head in silence.

"You have an old mother to support," continued Isaac, "whose staff and comfort you are. It is your duty to make her declining years happy. You cannot take a Jewish wife without causing her boundless grief. Some day, when you have seen more of the world, you will marry one of your own faith, one who worships the same Christ whom you adore, and who will secure you peace and contentment. Then you will perhaps wonder how you could have ever bestowed more than a passing thought upon a Jewess."

"Does Bertha think as you do?"

"Yes. She bids you go to your uncle and forget her."

There was a sorrowful firmness in Kern's voice, as he replied :

"I will go. I haven't the courage to see her again. Tell her that I say good-by. May God bless her."

"If ever you need a friend—" said Isaac.

He did not finish the sentence, for Kern had seized his hat and was gone.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE CONFESSION.

"There is no future pang  
Can deal that justice on the self-condemned  
He deals on his own soul."—*Byron*.

THE sun rose majestically on the morning, filling all the world with joy and splendor. Warm and cheerful it shone into Isaac's bedroom, and awakened him to the cares and responsibilities of life. He felt in better spirits than he had for days. The happy termination of Bertha's affair, and his own signal victory over the dangers of apostasy, had lifted a burden from his heart.

"The sun shines upon me," he said, "as though I were a man without sin or stain. Perhaps God, too, has a smile of pardon for me."

He found Lena and the children waiting for him at the breakfast-table. Bertha appeared contented, and in no way expressed regret at the step she had taken, and Isaac felt grateful. After breakfast, he called his wife and sister into his bedroom, and closing the door, he courageously began to unbosom himself of his awful secret.

Human nature is a complex affair, displaying strange inconsistencies. But a day or two ago, the very suggestion of a confession had thrown this man into a convul-

sion of fear and hesitation. To-day he faced the ordeal, not only with courage, but with a feeling akin to exaltation. What a world of misery he would have spared himself had he taken this resolution years ago !

"You have noticed," he began boldly, "that since my return from the West I have been unhappy and miserable—that I have been burdened by a weight of woe, which at times threatened to drive me insane. I know it worried you, I could see it in your faces, but I had not the heart to explain the cause of my sorrow."

"Ah, my dear," interrupted Lena, "you will never know what anxiety and wretchedness your condition caused me, nor how often I tried to guess the cause of your broodings."

"You could not have guessed it, Lena ; it was too terrible. The time has come when I feel impelled to tell you all, to relieve my mind of its burden. Lena, Bertha, don't shrink from me in horror. I am a murderer !"

The accusing word was uttered with a sob of mingled grief and remorse. A host of cruel recollections were awakened within his soul, and for a time his emotions mastered him.

"A murderer !" cried Lena, in alarm. "My God, Isaac, what have you done ?"

The truth seemed more terrible than she had even conjectured it.

Isaac sat for awhile with his face buried in his hands. The worst was over. After a painful pause, he managed to tell his sorrowful story. He spared not a single detail. He related minutely his every act

from the day he started for the gold fields to the hour of his return. He recounted the petty tyrannies to which he was exposed, the persecutions he was compelled to endure, at the hands of the unsympathetic miners. He described his relations towards Sweeny, and the terror with which the intoxicated wretch inspired him. He told with graphic vividness the incidents of that terrible evening in which he had killed his enemy. As he spoke, his wife and sister were carried in imagination to the spot, and witnessed the hideous struggle and its bloody termination.

"I killed him," cried Isaac—"I killed him; but God knows it was not premeditated murder. A moment afterwards I would have gladly sacrificed my life to recall that of the murdered man."

He paused in his narration and looked at his wife. She was weeping silently.

Bertha had her eyes fixed on her brother in mute bewilderment as he spoke. Her soul went out in tenderness to this harassed man, and when he had finished speaking, she drew near to him and pressed his hand in sympathy.

"Lena," he cried, "you will not shrink from me? You will not despise the murderer?"

"Despise you? Shrink from you?" she cried. "Are you not my beloved husband? You are not as great a sinner as you have imagined. The law authorizes killing in self-defence, and in the eyes of justice you are no criminal at all."

"I only wonder," said Bertha, her face aglow with indignation, "how you could have refrained so long

from killing the brute. Had I been in your place, I should have disposed of him when he first discharged his revolver at me."

"Oh, the misery I endured all these years at the thought that I had killed one of God's children!" sighed Isaac. "I saw his spectre by day and by night. It left me no peace of mind, no rest. Life became a burden to me."

"Why did you not confide in me, your wife?"

"I dared not, Lena; I feared you would shun me."

"How little you know the heart of a loving wife! Have not women clung to assassins and loved them in spite of their most cold-blooded and atrocious crimes? And should I desert my husband because out of love for me he exposed himself to the dangers of an uncivilized land, and because he preserved his life at the cost of another's worthless existence? Oh, I wanted so to comfort you in your misery, but you obstinately closed your heart against me, and would not let me share your troubles."

This was a revelation to poor Isaac. He took his wife lovingly in his arms and kissed her.

"There was the money, too," he continued. "I had that upon my conscience. When I knew that Sweeny was dead I took the gold—his share and mine—and carried it away. That money has been a curse to me. It brought me nothing but misery. Shall I confess it? My charities were not prompted by the desire to do good, but for the sole purpose of getting rid of the gold that was eating into my heart."

"There again your reasoning was wrong," answered



Lena. "Had you left the gold, it would undoubtedly have fallen into the hands of some one who had less claim to it than yourself. It has been applied to its best possible use. It has gladdened the hearts of the poor, has alleviated suffering, and has been a blessing."

"To all but me," answered Isaac, gloomily.

"Alas, how you must have suffered!" cried Bertha.

"God only knows what my sufferings have been. For more than two years my life has been a hideous nightmare, without a ray of hope or happiness. I tried in every way to relieve my conscience—"

"Every way but the right way," interrupted Lena. "You should have confided in me, and then gone to the authorities and confessed your wrong."

"But the trial, Lena, the inevitable punishment. I could not endure the thought of bringing the disgrace upon you."

Isaac winced and turned pale even now at the thought of the disgraceful court scene and imprisonment.

"You are mistaken," cried Lena, with conviction. "There would have been no trial, no disgrace. You would have said to the judges, 'Here was a man who on several occasions tried to kill me. I bore with him until the danger became imminent. Then I rose, like a man, and defended my life.' You would not have appeared like a criminal, but like a hero."

"I often tried to take that view of it, but my guilt and subsequent remorse seemed to have weakened my reasoning powers. I was conscious of but one thing—namely, that I was a murderer, and that God had no

mercy, no atonement for such as I. In my desperation I was on the point of committing another wrong."

"Another wrong," repeated Lena, in alarm.

"Yes, that of becoming a Catholic. My charities led me to the house of Father Kelly. There I learned of the doctrine of a Saviour of souls. So great was the weight of my guilt that I longed to cast the burden upon another. I contemplated the adoption of Christianity as a means of finding atonement for my crime."

"Isaac! You a Christian?" cried his wife, in dismay.

"It is all over, Lena. It was but the dream of a moment. It is a comfortable creed for him who can place implicit belief in it; but I could not understand it—or rather, I understood it too well."

"Surely our time-honored religion holds out as much consolation as does the Gentile belief," said Lena. "A religion which has lived and flourished through four thousand years, and made countless millions happy, must be able to afford relief to a sin-oppressed soul."

"It must be so," replied Isaac, reflectively. "In my misery I had no patience with the rational doctrine that man must work out his own salvation. It is my intention to go at once to Rabbi Kauffman and tell him all I have told you. He will instruct me in that religion to which I have become a stranger. I will find solace and atonement in Judaism. My soul must first be cleansed of its iniquity."

"And then?" asked Bertha.

"Then," continued Isaac, with resolution—"then I shall go to the authorities, confess my crime, and take

the consequences. I must first feel that God has pardoned me. My wife knows of my guilt and has forgiven me. What care I, then, if all the world condemn me?"

"The world will judge as I have judged," said Lena, while Isaac held her to his heart in a passionate embrace.

Long spoke they of the crime and its influence. Bertha and Lena had a hundred questions to ask, and when the conference came to an end Isaac felt no longer like an assassin, but like a hero, who had made a bold strike for life and honor and was secure in the world's approval.

In the afternoon he called on Rabbi Kauffman. That worthy man was sitting in his comfortable study, patiently striving to initiate his son Ben into the mysteries of Hebrew, much to Ben's disgust, for it was a fine day, and there was more actual pleasure to be found in the street playing marbles than at home conjugating Hebrew verbs.

Ben was not sorry, therefore, when Mr. Schwartz entered and asked the Rabbi for an hour's interview. He was straightway dismissed, and rushed out of doors before the edict could be revoked.

Into the astonished Rabbi's ear Isaac poured the story of his misdeeds. He spared no essential detail. At the close of the narration the Rabbi sat back in his chair for a while without speaking. Then he said:

"I think you have made yourself miserable unnecessarily. You killed a man under a strong provocation, and in self-defence. The law will not hold you guilty.

A man would be less than human who would allow himself to be slain without a protest—without using the means at hand to defend himself. Self-preservation is heaven's first law."

Isaac then related his narrow escape from apostasy. Rabbi Kauffman listened to his story in a state of bewilderment.

"But, my dear friend," he ejaculated, "what could have induced you to seek heavenly pardon outside of your own religion? Is not Judaism able to take care of the spiritual welfare of its children?"

"Pardon me, Rabbi, if I lay a portion of the blame of my infidelity upon you."

"Upon me?"

"Yes; indirectly, of course. I returned from the West with a terrible burden upon my conscience. I had killed a human being and had profited financially by his death. I was afraid of the law, but I was still more afraid of the anger of God. Moral coward that I was, I believed that a prayer from my lips would be blasphemy; that there was no pardon for my crime. For a time I neglected the synagogue; I was a Jew in name only. One day I went to hear you preach. It was the Day of Atonement and the anniversary of my crime. You spoke of the possibility of pardon for every crime but murder. How I yearned for one word of consolation, for one ray of hope to cheer me on my dreary way! You denied me every comfort. 'For the murderer,' you said, 'there is no atonement.' Those terrible words plunged me down the abyss of despair. I tried to reason them away, to convince myself that

God could not be less just than man. I proposed to you a union of friends to study the Talmud. I desired to find a passage, a rabbinical decision which bore upon my case and held out a hope of pardon. Here again I was doomed to disappointment. I again heard the awful sentence pronounced, 'For the murderer there is no atonement.' Is it a wonder, Rabbi, that I despaired of finding peace and redemption in Judaism; that I sought for it in the Gentile faith, which bade me cast my sins upon another and be forgiven?"

"Alas!" cried the Rabbi, sadly, "that I should have been so grievously misunderstood. It is true that the Day of Atonement holds out no forgiveness, where the wrongdoer and his victim have not become reconciled, and hence murder is without the pale of atonement. But the Jewish law does not look upon your deed as murder. Here, in Numbers, chapter xxxv.," he said, opening the Scriptures, "Moses, after enumerating the various kinds of murder, says, 'But if he thrust him suddenly, without enmity, or have cast upon him anything, without lying in wait, such a man is no murderer, but shall find safeguard in the City of Refuge.' Killing in self-defence is no murder; it is, in a measure, a retribution for another's crime. If the Jewish law does not punish such a malefactor, Judaism would surely not deprive him of the hope of divine mercy."

"Oh, why did I not know this before!" sighed Isaac. "From what unspeakable agony it would have saved me."

"Let us look into the Mishna," continued the Rabbi, opening his folios. "Here we read, in chapter ix., that



unless the blow was delivered with the intention of killing, it is not considered murder. Where the blow was directed to one portion of the body and caused death by affecting another, the crime was not punished. Here, again, we see it is only cold-blooded and deliberate murder which is punishable. The Jews never considered God less merciful than man. No, friend Schwartz, we believe that God is a God of mercy, long-suffering and forgiving. My language may have been a little severe on the occasions referred to, but I meant to discuss only deliberate murder."

"But even to such an assassin the Christian religion has a prospect of salvation."

"So has Judaism; but it is not found in blind faith nor in vicarious atonement. Our Rabbis teach that subsequent trials and good deeds have the power to absolve from any sin, however great. Deep suffering is in itself a regeneration, an initiation into a state of grace. The cruel memories, agonized regrets and bitter struggles which conscience imposes, are an atonement. They purify the soul and efface the evil. No need of faith, no need of blind belief, to acquire salvation. Where trials have followed in the train of crime, these will insure God's forgiveness."

"What a simple belief!" cried Isaac.

"And yet how rational," answered the Rabbi. "No one can bear our sins for us. We must bear the penalty of our acts, and therefore trials and noble deeds alone have the power to compensate for the evil done."

"And so I have been torturing myself needlessly all these years, leading a life of martyrdom."

"Your very misery, coupled with your deeds of charity, have washed away your sins. Before God you are clean. He can and does forgive his erring children, without the intervention of a crucified Son."

"Rabbi," replied the grateful man, "you do not know what a load you have taken from my heart. To think that I was on the point of exchanging this beautiful religion for one which would have been at war with my intelligence."

"And yet," said the Rabbi, musingly, "the Christian religion is very beautiful. It is built upon all that is noble in Judaism, and, to those who have been educated in it, it is soul-inspiring and consoling. Religion is, after all, but an accident of birth, and, while some few individuals succeed in breaking from its bounds, the masses are content to believe as their parents believed. Would that all religions were more tolerant one towards the other, for they all have their origin in a belief in the one God."

Isaac rose to go.

"Rabbi," he said, "I shall come again. Teach me more about the glorious, rational and comprehensible creed of my fathers."

"So be it," answered the Rabbi, deeply moved. "But you have still a trial before you—the greatest of them all. Deliver yourself up to the authorities, confess your crime, and abide by their decision."

"To-morrow I shall go to the chief of police. I am at peace with my God and with myself, and I yearn to be at peace with all mankind."

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE REUNION.

"The drying up a single tear has more  
Of honest fame than shedding seas of gore."—*Byron.*

AT eight o'clock that same evening there was a vigorous and continuous ringing at the front door bell of Schwartz's house, and Father Kelly entered. Isaac received him with some misgivings. "He is coming to remind me of my neglected studies," he thought. "How shall I tell him that I have changed my mind?"

To his surprise, however, the priest did not allude to the subject of baptism.

"Are you at leisure this evening, Mr. Schwartz?" he asked, after mutual greetings had passed.

"Yes."

"Then I have a mission for you. I know you are too charitably inclined to refuse."

"Tell me what you desire me to do."

"I have just come from a wretched abode on Oak Street, where I found a family reduced to the greatest poverty. The man lies ill in bed with a fever, while his wife and child appear to be starving."

"Good heavens!" cried Isaac, pulling a roll of bills from his pocket. "Here, Father Kelly, take this to them. Here is enough to satisfy them for some time."

Father Kelly shook his head.

"It is not money they want. I have relieved their momentary needs. But the man, although he is a Catholic, desires to see an Israelite. He believes his end is approaching, and says he cannot die in peace until he has made a confession to a Jew."

Isaac seized his hat.

"Come, let us go at once," he said ; and the two men passed out into the street.

Oak Street was but a short distance away, and the place, a squalid, dingy tenement, was soon reached. Isaac paused in painful surprise, as the priest pointed out the house. It was the same in which he had dwelt when he first came to America, the same in which we made his acquaintance.

The priest led the way up several flights of stairs, and opening a door, ushered his companion into the little room. How vividly did Isaac recall the painful past ! There could be no mistake about it. This was the same room in which he and Lena had lived and suffered. There was no change in its appearance, except that its walls looked dirtier, its bare floors more dilapidated than formerly. There was the broken table at which he had sat when his wife had called him by that hateful name "Shlemiel." There was the same bed in which he had received his inspiration to try his luck in the West. Nothing had changed except the inmates, and to these Isaac now directed his attention.

On the bed lay a pale, sallow-visaged man, with his eyes closed. By his side, holding his hand, sat a thin-faced, little woman, while on the mattress in the corner,

covered by a counterpane, slept a child of uncertain age. The woman rose when the priest entered, and advanced to meet him.

"How is he?" asked Father Kelly.

"Better, your Reverence. The tonic you brought has revived him, but he is still busy with the one strange idea. He wants to speak to a Jew. He is asleep now."

"I have brought this gentleman with me. Perhaps he can relieve your husband of his mental burden."

The woman held out her hand in welcome, and Isaac stepped to the bed and bent over the suffering man. There was something strangely familiar in that pallid face, with its shaggy beard. Isaac gazed at him long and intently, but he could not recall the features.

"It is strange," said the woman, "how this fancy pursues him. I think he would soon get well, if he were not haunted by the one idea."

She put her hand under the invalid's pillow, and drew out a long strip of cloth, which had once been white, but with frequent handling had changed to a color bordering on dirty gray.

"See this rag, your Reverence," she said. "He has carried it with him for years. He says it saved his life, and he cannot rest until he has given it back to the man to whom it belonged. He loves this rag as though it were a thing of life."

Isaac took the rag and gazed at it intently. There was a black border at the lower end, and a remnant of fringe. There were several rusty spots upon it, which might have been caused by blood. He shuddered as he



handed it back to the woman, for in his mind there arose the vision of a murdered man, with a strip of praying scarf wound about his bleeding temple.

Suddenly Isaac uttered a cry of surprise. Was it imagination or reality? The face of the sick man began to assume the features of Sweeny. Yes, that was the same low forehead and bull-like neck, the same reddish beard and sneering lips; but how changed, how wasted by illness and misery!

At Isaac's exclamation, the sufferer opened his eyes and glanced about him. Of a sudden he sat bolt upright in bed, and grasped Schwartz by the hand.

"Tell me," he cried, feebly—"am I dreaming? Are you not Ike Black—Sheeny Ike?"

For a moment Isaac was too startled to reply, but recovering himself, he answered:

"They called me Ike Black in the diggings."

"Christ be praised!" muttered the stranger. "I have found him! Ike, don't you know me? Don't you know Dick Sweeny?"

Isaac recoiled. Was this another cheat of the senses, such as he had so often experienced? Had the spectre of the murdered man again come to mock him, to punish him with terrors of remorse?

"Ike, don't shrink from me," pleaded the man. "Come to me and say you forgive me. Don't be afraid to take my hand, Ike."

It was real—Sweeny was still alive! Isaac threw himself upon the bed in a wild transport of joy, and the two men—the Jew and the Catholic—lay in each other's passionate embrace.

Father Kelly and the woman gazed on in silent mystification. They could not understand this strange denouement. For some moments not a word was spoken ; both Sweeny and Schwartz were weeping in each other's arms.

At length Schwartz exclaimed :

"Then you are not dead? God be thanked! For more than two years I have been leading a life of self-reproach, believing that I had murdered you."

"You murdered me!" repeated Sweeny, in surprise. "What a terrible mistake! I, on the other hand, have been reproaching myself with being the cause of your disappearance and probable death."

"There is evidently some misunderstanding between us," said Isaac, trying to smile. "Since we are both alive, perhaps a mutual explanation may relieve our minds. Tell me, Dick—what do you remember about that terrible night when we were together last?"

"I remember," said Dick, with an effort, "your patient endurance and your earnest endeavors to keep me straight. I also remember that I had been drinking heavily one day at the village. Then my memory is a blank until I awoke and found myself on the floor of the cabin. My head felt very heavy and I could scarcely arise to my feet. I called you, but received no reply. When I began to examine myself, I found that I had been cut on the head, and that some one had tied a bandage about the wound. That bandage saved my life; without it I should have bled to death. I took it off and recognized it as a part of your praying scarf. There were more strips of it scattered about the floor.

Then I understood your loving kindness. Seeing me wounded, you had torn up your scarf, which I knew was very precious to you, and with the strips you had staunched my wounds. It was noble of you, Ike."

"And what did you suppose had become of me?" asked Isaac, surprised at the turn events had taken.

"I could not come to any plausible conclusion regarding you. When I recovered sufficiently, I staggered out into the open air, and found that the gold was gone. Then I took it for granted that some of the gang had found out our secret and had come to rob us. That accounted for my wound, and for the fact that the gold had disappeared. They had no doubt given me up for dead. It was clear to me that you must have come into the cabin, and seeing me insensible, had done all in your power to help me. What became of you then I could not guess. At times I feared that the gang might have killed you and thrown your body into the creek; at other times I had an idea that, after saving my life, you must have escaped in some manner."

"Well, what did you do when you recovered your strength?"

"I became a better man, Ike. The wound left me very weak. Some of the fellows from the village found me a couple of days after, and nursed me through. I had a close call; but when I got well I decided on better things. In the first place, I swore off on John Barleycorn. I haven't touched a drop of liquor since. Next I looked up my wife and child. I had a long hunt before I found them; they were living in Colorado and were very poor. In spite of all my sins, Sally took

me back to her heart, and we have been happy since. Finally I started a farm near Pueblo, but I could not rest."

"Why not?"

"I wanted to know whether you were still alive. I wanted to find the man who had preserved my life, and whose spotless and humble way of living was to be the pattern for my own future existence. This desire gave me no peace. The praying scarf I kept with me. See, here it is. I almost worshiped it as something sent to me by God. I remembered that you told me once you came from this town, and when I could scrape enough money together to travel, I came on here with Sally and Jim to find you."

"But how came you in this unfortunate condition?" asked Schwartz, deeply interested.

"When I arrived, a month ago, I had still some money left. I inquired for you at the Mayor's office, but no one knew of any such person as Ike Black. Then I was taken sick with fever. The doctor said it was malaria. Gradually my money gave out, and I didn't know a soul in town. I tried to get a job at anything, but was too weak to work. Finally I found shelter here, and have been in bed ever since. I was afraid I was going to die without seeing you. If it hadn't been for Father Kelly finding us, I might be dead now. God's ways are wonderful. I'll soon be better, Ike, since I've found you and given you back your scarf."

There was a childish satisfaction in the face and gestures of the grizzled miner, as he stroked the hand of his old partner.

"Ah, Ike," he said, "you don't know how happy I am to find you alive and well."

It was now Isaac's turn to tell his version of that eventful night. He told everything, laying due stress upon Dick's conduct and upon his own crime. He accused himself of assault and of theft, and described, with tears in his eyes, the anguish and misery he had endured since.

"So you see," he added, "instead of being your preserver, as you imagined, I was in reality your murderer, for I surely believed you dead. But you were avenged. Never did assassin experience the tortures and remorse that fell to my lot."

This was a revelation to Sweeny. He listened with intense interest to every word.

"Can you forgive me?" he cried, at length. "It was my brutality, my inhuman conduct toward you, which caused your hasty deed. I alone am to blame. Do you forgive me, Ike? That was one reason why I wanted to find you before I died. I wanted to ask your pardon for all the wrong I had done you out in the diggings."

"Nonsense, Dick. It is I who must beg your forgiveness for my attempt upon your life. God be thanked that His hand kept me from being a murderer!"

"That blow made a man of me, Ike—a God-fearing, self-respecting man."

Father Kelly, who had been an attentive listener, took part in the conversation, and expressed his delight at the happy termination of the unfortunate affair.

"It is useless to reproach one another," he said. "You were both in the wrong. But the trial has not



been in vain ; for of you, Sweeny, it has made a new being, with the sense of the duties of a man and a Catholic, while of Mr. Schwartz it has made a philanthropist, whose praises are sung by both Jew and Gentile."

"Whatever I possess," cried Isaac, "belongs in part to Sweeny. He shall share my wealth with me. Dick, rejoice ! Your poverty is at an end."

Isaac related to the astonished man how he had amassed a fortune upon the foundation of that sack of gold.

"Hurry, Dick," he said. "You must get well, and we will share it."

"No, Ike," replied the other, "it is impossible. The money is yours. You helped to toil and struggle for it. The few thousand dollars you took with you would soon have been dissipated, had you left them in my possession. I could never content myself in a city like this. I should perhaps fall back into my former life. Now that I have seen you, I shall soon be well, and then I shall go back to my farm and pass the balance of my days in hard work, by the side of my faithful Sally."

"It will be better so," said his wife, tenderly, kissing his pale face. "We will toil together, and make up in love and happiness for the time we have lost."

An hour afterwards a carriage drove up to the squalid tenement on Oak Street, and Sweeny, his wife and child, were deposited into it. It carried them to Schwartz's house. Here rooms had been prepared for the new arrivals, and Lena, who had been apprised of

the strange facts, stood at the door to greet them. The good woman embraced Sally like a sister and made her feel thoroughly at home. Sweeny was put into a comfortable bed and the best doctor in the city was called to attend him.

"I came near killing him once," said Isaac, with tears of joy in his eyes; "I dare not lose him this time."

In a week's time Dick was completely restored, and, thanks to the kind treatment of their Jewish hosts, the entire Sweeny family began to improve wonderfully in appearance.

Happy days were those for Isaac. A thousand times did he and Sweeny revert to the old days in the mines, and recollections which had been extremely painful to the self-tortured man now became a source of keen delight. Forgotten were all the hardships, the petty persecutions, the ignominy endured; there remained but the recollection of happy incidents, and the joyful certainty that the supposed dead had returned to life.

Sweeny remained with Isaac for more than a month. He felt so great a pleasure in being thus received by a noble and virtuous family, so keen an enjoyment in the companionship of the once despised and humiliated Jew, that he found it difficult to tear himself away, and he kept deferring his departure from week to week.

One day he accompanied Schwartz to the synagogue, and seemed deeply interested by what he saw and heard.

"Do you know, Ike," he said, when they had returned, "I have half a mind to become a Jew."

"Why?" asked Isaac, amused.

"I don't know exactly. Perhaps it is because I see you and your family so happy ; perhaps it is because I hear so much of your deeds of charity and of your goodness of heart. Then, too, I like your ceremonies, the holy sanctity of your Sabbath. In fact, your religion seems to me so simple and delightful, your home appears so much superior to any I have ever seen, that it would not require much persuasion to convert me to Judaism."

"Give up the idea at once, Dick," replied Schwartz, seriously. "Happiness is not a matter of any particular religion, but of individual disposition. You can be far more contented and do more good in the faith of your parents than in any other. Remain a Catholic ; but try to be a good Catholic, for a good Catholic is better than an indifferent Jew, and vice versa. There is after all but one religion, and that is love for God and duty towards your fellow-man."

On the very day of this conversation Bishop Keane and Father Kelly paid Mr. Schwartz a visit.

"How stands it with our baptism?" asked the bishop. "When can we go ahead with the ceremony?"

"Your Reverence will pardon me if I disappoint you," replied Isaac. "I have renounced all desire of becoming converted."

The bishop and the priest looked at each other with significant glances.

"I feared as much," said Father Kelly, sadly.

"You see, your Reverence, a serious crime weighed heavily upon my conscience, and for a moment I dreamed of seeking atonement in the Catholic Church ;

but a careful investigation convinced me that I should seek in vain."

"Why in vain?" asked the bishop. "The holy church has the power to absolve from sin. Jesus offers salvation to all who come to Him."

"To all who believe; but I could not believe, your Reverence. I sought for proof of the divinity of Christ, but found it not. Would you have me become a hypocrite by professing faith in a thing I believe to be impossible?"

"You have been misled by your profane books," answered the priest. "To me it all appears so clear, so beautiful, that to doubt it would be difficult. What a grand conception is that of the Almighty coming down to earth to suffer for our sins!"

"Grand, perhaps, if you have been educated to consider it so; absurd, when you look at it with the critical eyes of unbelief."

"There you have the explanation," replied the bishop. "Your unbelief distorts the image of the grandest spectacle the world has ever seen."

"Cast off your unbelief," exclaimed the priest. "It is of the devil. Have faith in Christ, and all will appear rational to you."

"It must appear rational to me before I can have faith in it. I must have proof—positive proof."

"Have you such proof of the accuracy of your own doctrines?"

"Yes. True, our Bible is filled with inaccuracies, but they scarcely affect Judaism. I know that there is a God. My own existence and the harmony in Nature

tell me so daily. I believe in Him as an only God. I know that the patriarchs were historical individuals, and that I am their descendant. I know that Moses gave some excellent laws which are at this remote age the best humanity possesses, and I obey them. Therefore I am a Jew. All this appeals to reason. It is independent of miracle, of divine inspiration of the Bible, of misinterpretations of the Scriptures—independent of any belief in the supernatural. To be a true Christian, however, I must place credence in many things which my reason refuses to accept as possible. To disbelieve in a single one of these would make me a heretic. Beautiful as these doctrines appear to you, who have imbibed them with your mother's milk, to me they are incomprehensible. Your Reverence will understand therefore that I can never become a Christian."

"But the salvation of your soul, the forgiveness of your sins," said the bishop.

"My religion holds out as much consolation as does your own. You say to me, 'Cast your sins upon the Saviour and become pure through faith.' My creed says, 'Bear the burden of your sins, and become pure through trial and affliction.' You say, 'Christ will intercede with the Father, and your guilt will be washed away.' My creed says, 'Show the Lord a contrite heart and a resolution to do better, and He will forgive.' I have found atonement, your Reverence, in the tenets of my father's religion."

The prelates arose to go. They felt their disappointment keenly, for Isaac had been a promising neophyte. Schwartz held out his hand at parting.



"Let us still be friends," he said. "Each can find happiness in his own way. To become a convert I would first have to unlearn all I have ever been taught concerning God, and that would be impossible at my age. You see it is, after all, a matter of faith, and faith is a matter of birth and education."

"Perhaps you are right," replied the bishop; and shaking the Israelite cordially by the hand, he and Father Kelly left the house.

Sweeny tarried a few weeks longer, and he, too, left. In vain Isaac offered him half his wealth and a share in his vast business interests. Dick refused. Isaac finally insisted upon his acceptance of ten thousand dollars, which he said rightfully belonged to him. Dick reluctantly accepted it, and with his happy wife and child left for his farm in Colorado.

For years he corresponded with his old partner, and his greatest aim was to lead a life which would make him worthy of the friendship of Isaac Schwartz.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE GAME OF SOLO.

"A guardian angel o'er his life presiding,  
Doubling his pleasures and his cares dividing."—*Rogers.*

ONE evening, not long after the events just narrated, Rosenheim invited Schwartz, Blumen and Bergthal to his home for a sociable game of solo. Rosenheim and Bergthal, since the engagement of their children, had become inseparable. The friendship of Damon and Pythias was commonplace in comparison with that existing between these whilom foes. They were known to send each other customers, when their own stock failed to fill the requirements, and surely greater friendship than this is unrecorded in profane history. Rosenheim considered himself an expert solo player, a second Hoyle, but his friends thought differently. He had a reprehensible habit of forgetting the most essential rules of the game, and consequently lost more frequently than he won. On such occasions he would work himself into a pitch of excitement ill befitting the president of a congregation, and out of all proportion to the booty at stake. He was blissfully ignorant of his shortcomings. His acquaintances rarely refused an invitation to play with him, for they won his money

and drank his wine with the spirit of true martyrs, and had an interesting and exciting time besides.

On this memorable evening quite a company had gathered in Rosenheim's parlor. Besides the men who were playing in the adjoining den, there were their several wives and Bertha Schwartz. Lena was to have been one of the party, but little Rose had developed symptoms of fever, so slight that only a mother's watchfulness could have detected it, and Lena decided to stay at home with the child. There was also present Mr. Louis Ehrlich, who came ostensibly to see the president about a matter connected with the synagogue, but in reality to bask in the sunlight of Bertha's smiles, for he had in some mysterious manner learned that she would be there. Ehrlich, since we saw him last, had progressed in his love, but not in his love-making. To him there was but one theme, and that was Bertha. The beautiful sunset, the picturesque clouds, the majestic trees, an interesting book, a superb picture, a Beethoven symphony, were all but variations of that theme, and spoke of her in varied ways. A boundless passion seized him when in her presence. A vague yearning drove him to her side, and he realized how empty was life unless she would fill it with her love. And yet, alas! while Mr. Ehrlich was not lacking in courage in matters pertaining to commerce, while he was over-bold in his dealings with the board members of the synagogue, while he managed things with a high hand at the club, yet he was an arrant coward when in the presence of Bertha. Often as he had planned an avowal, he found his heart shrink within him, and he

left the field with the battle unfought, the avowal unspoken.

If Bertha had but given him a little encouragement—some sign of favor! But he still could discover nothing which led him to believe that she was partial to him, and he did not desire to leave the city in despair, like poor Jacoby. So he continued to meet her at the Harmony, or visit her at her home, determined each day to end the suspense; but, when he screwed up his courage to the proposing point, one glance from Bertha's saucy eyes drove his blood back into his heart and shattered his carefully-planned compliments to the four winds of heaven.

Solo, the whist of the Germans, is naturally an exciting game, productive of much noise and considerable quarreling, but the gentlemen were playing in an unusually quiet manner. Only once, when Rosenheim got "bait" on a "herz-solo-call," was there something like an incipient revolution in the card-room, but the noise soon subsided.

The ladies were in the adjoining sitting-room discussing the all-absorbing servant-girl question, which even at that early day was a topic of importance to the housekeeper. Mrs. Rosenheim was talking to an interested audience of the manifold difficulties she had experienced in securing a competent cook. The last queen of the kitchen had shown herself utterly incompetent to grasp the mysteries of the Jewish cuisine, and, in spite of repeated demonstrations, evinced an appalling ignorance of the composition of "shalet" and "kugel."

There was a general wagging of heads, for each of these ladies had a similar woeful tale to tell.

Mrs. Blumen related a particularly pathetic incident anent the misguided efforts on the part of her cook to bake the Purim cakes in lard, and the hearers held up their hands in pious gratification at the narrow escape.

Mrs. Bergthal's experience, however, capped the climax.

"What do you think my gem of a girl did last week?" she asked. "Actually threw away a dish of 'gengsrieben,' because she didn't know they were good to eat."

A universal exclamation of horror at such sacrilege greeted the speaker.

"Servants are a hardship," said Mrs. Blumen, at length, shaking her head vigorously. "To be happy, one must get along without them."

This intellectual *conversazione* was interrupted from time to time by appropriate intermezzos from the card-room, such as, "I pass;" "Booms;" "Eckstein;" "Kreutz-donner-wetter;" "Vot does de Talmud say?" "I call;" "Rosenheim is bait."

Meanwhile Bertha and Mr. Ehrlich, for whom neither cards nor servant-girls had any interest, sat apart and conversed in low tones. It was a moment of intense suspense for the young man. He was very close to her, and at intervals her hair almost stroked his cheeks and sent the hot blood mantling to his brow. He longed to caress the soft tresses. He thought of a poem by Heinrich Heine:



" Dame Fortune is a fickle fairy,  
Who loves not by your side to stay ;  
She strokes your hair with fingers airy,  
Imprints a kiss and flies away."

If he could but fetter Dame Fortune, hold her in his embrace, have her stroke his forehead and kiss his lips forever ! To him Bertha was fortune, bliss, ecstasy !

Said Bertha, at length, with an assumed air of great indifference :

" I suppose you know I am going to leave town to-morrow ?"

" No," he replied, as he felt his heart sink. " Where are you going ?"

" To visit a relative in Richmond."

The warm blood surged to his cheeks as he stammered :

" To Richmond ?"

" Yes," replied Bertha. " Lena's cousin came from Germany several months ago and settled in Richmond. She has written, begging one of us to come and see her. Lena cannot go, so I have decided to undertake the trip."

" Why, this is very sudden," said poor Ehrlich.

He remembered, with a palpitating heart, that Mr. Jacoby had also moved to Richmond, and he wondered whether there could be any esoteric connection between these two migrations.

" It is rather sudden," assented Bertha. " We only decided on the journey this morning. There is little to keep me here just now—no social event of any importance."

"But Richmond is quite far," murmured Ehrlich, not finding anything more logical to say in his consternation.

"Yes," replied the girl; "it is a very long ride, and I must leave by daybreak. Unfortunate, isn't it?"

"Very," grumbled Ehrlich, with a vague apprehension that if he delayed, his opportunity might be eternally lost.

"Dear me!" said Bertha, looking at her watch and rising suddenly. "I must go home, or I'll oversleep myself in the morning."

She glanced into the card-room.

"Isaac, can you take me home now?" she asked of her brother. "You know I must get up before day-break."

Schwartz was scanning his cards. "I'll make it a solo-herz," he said, oblivious to everything but the game.

Bertha repeated the question.

"My dear!" exclaimed Schwartz, greatly surprised; "are you 'meshugga' (mad)? Leave in the middle of a solo-herz? Wait ten minutes, and I'll go with you."

Bertha rejoined her silent admirer, who had been pondering how best to break the news of his affection for her. Twice he started a vague declaration, but the words obstinately refused to find utterance.

Bertha spoke of the last Harmony ball, of Emma's approaching marriage, and of the prospects of amateur theatricals during the winter. The married ladies were discussing the bargains in mantillas at Blumen's.

Suddenly there was an explosion in the card-room. The voice of Rosenheim was heard in vehement accusa-

tion, while the combined voices of the other men were heard in angry protestations.

"Who ever saw such playing?" cried Rosenheim, indignantly. "If you had played correctly, I must have von. I had herz-oss, kœnig, sechs-mal, ecke-zehn, zudritt and shippen-oss, besetzt! Wouldn't you call dat a good hand for a solo?"

"Yes," said Blumen, excitedly, "if you had played out. But Schwartz led with a small club and you trumped it with your best card. You should have played out the smallest card in your hand. That blunder cost you ten points."

The excitement ran high. The gentlemen were fast losing their tempers. Rosenheim had three baits to win back, or his loss would be considerable.

At this juncture Bertha again appeared at the door, and urged her brother to take her home. It was an inopportune and inauspicious move on her part.

"Bertha," ejaculated Schwartz, in surprise, "you ought to know better! It is as much as my life is worth to stop before Rosenheim gets out of his 'baits.' If you can't wait, go home alone."

Here Mr. Ehrlich had an inspiration, such as comes to a man but once in a lifetime.

"Let me see you home, Miss Schwartz," he said, pleadingly.

Said Bertha coyly, "I should reproach myself for taking you away from such good company."

To which Ehrlich answered, with inexplicable courage and tact, "With your departure there is no longer any attraction for me here. Let me see you home."

Bertha blushed and accepted. They bade the ladies good-night and went out together. What a relief from the hot and smoke-laden parlor was the cold, invigorating atmosphere of the street!

For a time they walked on in silence, a strange emotion overpowering their souls. The moon shone brightly, and its rays lit up the girl's ruddy cheeks, and mirrored itself in her deep brown eyes. She raised her glance to heaven and sighed. "How beautiful it all is!" she exclaimed, wistfully. "To me there is nothing more eloquent than the sky. Of what distance, what immensity, what marvelous order the stars and moon give evidence. I can almost hear the music of the spheres."

"There is a cloud scudding across the moon," said Ehrlich, catching her mood. "So do doubts and sorrows come to darken our lives."

"We must not let them. See, the cloud has gone and the moon is clear again. Trials and cares have no power to darken the soul; they are but transitory. The brightness of the soul is eternal."

He felt her arm tremble in his. "Are you cold?" he asked.

"Oh, no! This is much better than being in the hot room. One can breathe here, one can live."

"And love," he exclaimed, involuntarily. The word had escaped him, and he wondered at his own temerity.

"Yes and love," she replied. "Surely Nature teaches us the philosophy of living and loving."

There was a long silence. Each seemed plunged in reflections they feared to voice.

Never had Bertha appeared so radiant, so lovable to

Ehrlich as she did with the moonlight streaming upon her. With a start Bertha appeared to realize the seriousness of the situation, and she hastily withdrew her arm from that of the young man. Then, woman-like, she endeavored to draw her companion back to the realities of life by a change of conversation. The transition was sudden and abrupt.

"I fear we are growing sentimental," she said. "This will never do! Come, let us talk about something else—about our friends. How thoroughly interested men become when playing cards!"

Ehrlich came back to earth with a rude mental shock.

"No wonder," he replied. "To them the game is as suggestive of the philosophy of life as is Nature to you and me. Did it never occur to you that life is very much like a game of solo?"

"Never," she replied, smiling.

"You see," he explained, shyly at first, but more confidently as he progressed, "the cards that are dealt are so many opportunities given us by Providence, which may be played for good or evil. Many, I fear, resemble Mr. Rosenheim, and make the worst possible use of the best possible material, and, as a result, they are badly 'bait.' "

"Go on," said Bertha, with manifest interest.

"There is the 'blind,' which represents those unknown and unforeseen circumstances which often frustrate our best endeavors. How many say, 'I pass,' and wearily lay down their hands, because these circumstances are inimical to their well-being."



Bertha was surprised to hear him grow so eloquent over a game of cards.

"In life, too," he continued, "each man must play a solo; must look out for himself, antagonized by all the rest."

"And in the end?" suggested Bertha.

"In the end, the player passes in his chips, and settles with his Maker."

There was a pause.

"Don't you think there is an analogy which you have overlooked?" asked the girl, furtively. "In life, as in solo, the hearts play an inordinately important part."

"So they do," assented Mr. Ehrlich.

He looked into her mischievous eyes, as though in doubt, then murmured, with a supreme effort:

"Bertha, my heart is weary of playing a solo. Will you give me yours to keep it company?"

Bertha hung her head demurely, but said nothing.

"Will you accept my love and my heart? Will you be my wife? Do not reject me. I have been in doubt so long, yearning, yet fearing to avow my love. Say you will be my wife."

Bertha was not unprepared for this confession; but it was unexpectedly sweet to her, and set her heart bounding none the less. Here was a soul in which she could confide, a man on whom she could lean. There was no difference of creed to forbid the union, no fear for the future to mar the bliss of the moment. She nestled closer to her lover, and he divined rather than heard her reply.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE CONCLUSION.

"Let me attune to lighter lays  
The harp that twanged the dreary dole—  
My footsteps fall in fairer ways,  
Lit by the dawn of golden days—  
The promise of a quiet soul."

—*Felix N. Gerson.*

BY seven in the morning the news of the engagement had spread from Pearl Street to Cedar, and had then been disseminated through every other street in which Israelites lived. Even Mrs. Lazinsky, in her court off Oak Street, heard of it, and ran over to the Schwartz domicile to wish them "masseltof." An engagement in a family as prominent as the Schwartzes was an event of importance. That evening the house was again crowded, as it had been on the day of Bertha's arrival. A case of champagne—the first that many of these good people had ever tasted—unloosened a score of tongues, and jollity reigned supreme. The Rabbi, true to his profession, waxed eloquent and made a speech, modeled after the dissertations of the Midrash, in which the names of Ehrlich (honest) and Schwartz (dark) lent themselves to some clever punning. Then Mr. Rosenheim, as president of the congregation, arose, rather unsteadily.

"I rise up," said he, "like a palloon, but not filled mit gas, but mit friendship for de 'Chusen und Kalle' (bride and groom) vot celebrate der engagement to-night. Vot does de Talmud say? *Kivan Shenosah Adam*. Vell, never mind vot de Talmud says. It means matrimony is an end of all trouble, bud it's hard to tell vich end. I have had experience mit matrimony, und can tell de groom some t'ings he don'd know yed. A 'chochem' (wise man) never tries to give a voman a satisfactory answer. It is vorse den useless. Don'd keep nodding secret from your vife. Dere may be some t'ings no man can find out; bud it's different mit a voman. Always gif your vife her own vay. It vill prevent her from being opliged to take it, anyhow. Before de vedding de girl is very dear to a man's heart; aber after de vedding she is dearer yet to his pocket-book."

Here Mr. Rosenheim became diffuse, and his wife, gently but firmly urged him back into his chair.

The Rabbi, acting as toastmaster, called upon Mr. Basch to make a few remarks. That gentleman merely looked at his wife, and regretted that he was not prepared.

Mr. Bergthal was next invited to say a word. It was quite a relief to him; for he desired, if possible, to out-do his friend Rosenheim.

"I didn'd expect to be called on," he said, naively, "or I vould have prepared myself; bud I remember a liddle poem vot might do for dis occasion." And he delivered himself of a carefully prepared doggerel, in a mixture of German, English and Hebrew, the concluding lines of which,

“Massel und Brocha  
Der ganzen Meschpocha,”

elicited much applause.

A month later Louis Ehrlich and Bertha Schwartz were married at the synagogue, which was resplendent with new paint and hangings. Submitting to an earnest request on the part of the groom, the board passed a resolution allowing men and their wives to sit side by side during the ceremony, and thus inaugurated a reform which filled the souls of the ultra pious with dismay, but which became popular with the younger element, and still survives.

The wedding dinner was served in sumptuous fashion at the Harmony Club, and Louis Ehrlich and Bertha, his wife, embarked with most favorable winds on their voyage of conjugal bliss.

Isaac Schwartz, the philanthropist, sat with his patient, affectionate helpmate at the head of the table, respected and venerated. Few knew his secret, few suspected the misery he had endured. “A lucky man!” folks called him; and now that his troubles were at an end, he deemed himself lucky indeed. On the day of Bertha’s wedding a sum of money was anonymously distributed through the dwellings of the needy, and every poor Israelite in B—— rejoiced. They did not need to be told the name of their benefactor; they divined it, and remembered him and the newly-married couple in their prayers.

Isaac’s philanthropy continued unabated. Doing good had become habitual with him, and each deed rebounded a blessing.

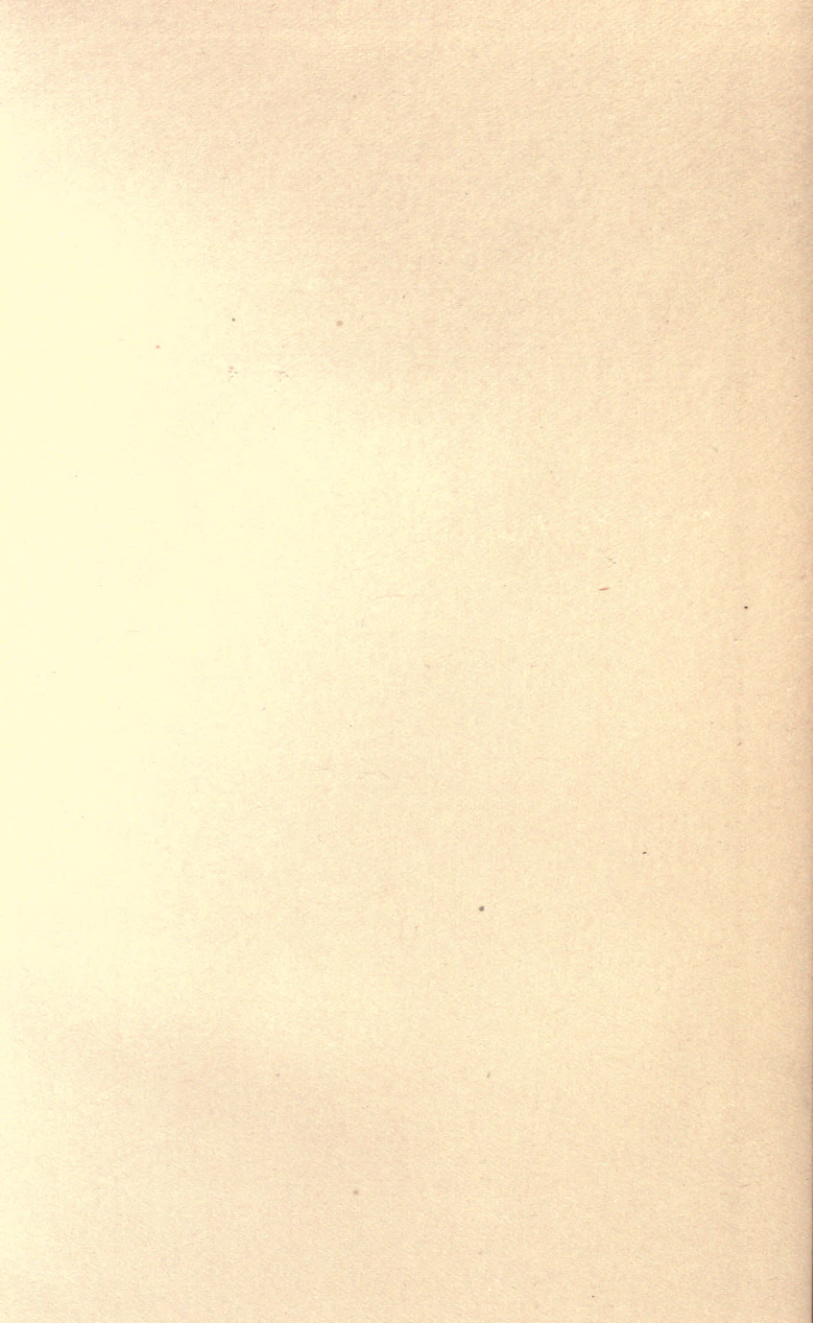
One day, a year or so later, August Kern called to see Bertha. He was on his wedding trip, and introduced his wife, a pretty blonde, totally unlike Bertha, but whom he loved devotedly, and who, moreover, offered up her prayers to the same Saviour and found salvation in the same faith. If there remained in his heart a trace of his former passion, his wife never discovered it.

THE END.













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